

Two Plain and Practical
DISCOURSES

Concerning

I.

Hardness of Heart.

S H E W I N G,

That some, who live under the Gospel,
are by a Judicial Dispensation, given
up to that Judgment, and the Signs
thereof.

I I.

T H E

Sin and Danger

O F

Disobedience to the Gospel.

By Increase Mather, President of Harvard-
College in Cambridge, and Preacher of
the Gospel at Boston in New-England.

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T O T H E

R E A D E R.

*T*Here is nothing more Amazing than that Hardness, which does possess the Hearts of Men. One of the Antients observes, concerning the Jews, that their Hearts were harder than the Rocks: For the Rocks rent at the Passion of Christ, but their Hearts were not rent at it. So in Jereboam's Time the Altar heard the Word of the Lord, and rent before it; but Jereboam's Heart was harder than the Stones of the Altar. The Scripture speaks of the Heart of a Sinner, as being harder than the Adamant, the hardest of Stones; of which it useth to be said, Incidit Gemmas, sed non inaditur ipse.

How far the Holy God, who cannot be Tempted with Evil, neither Tempt-

To the Reader.

eth he any Men, *does concur in that Judicial Obduration; which they who are the Objects of Divine Preterition, are smitten with, is a difficult Question to determine.* I have been willing to decline unprofitable Speculations, and to keep to clear Scripture Revelation concerning it.

One of my Hearers, who did in Short-Hand take from me what I deliver'd, having Transcribed his Notes, brought them to me. I have perused them, and find that they are Consonant to what I express'd. Notwithstanding the Laxness of the Style, I hope they may be of Use to the ordinary sort of Readers, whose Edification was design'd in the Preaching, and is so in the Printing of them; to which (having been importuned thereunto) I have consented.

Boston, N. E.
Nov. 1. 1698.

Increase Mather.

Two

Two Plain and Practical
DISCOURSES.

Isaiah vi. 9, 10, 11.

And he said, Go, and tell this People; Hear ye indeed, but understand not: and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the Heart of this People fat, and make their Ears heavy, and shut their Eyes: lest they see with their Eyes, and hear with their Ears, and understand with their Heart, and Convert, and be healed. Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until the Cities be wasted without Inhabitant, and the Houses without Man, and the Land be utterly desolate.

THIS Chapter contains the Substance of the *Fourth Sermon*, preached by the Prophet *Isaiah* to the *Jews*, in which he gives an Account of two Particulars.

First, Of a Glorious Vision which he had. He saw the Lord sitting upon an high Throne, and the Holy Angels worshipping
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and praising of Him. This Vision had a very humbling Effect on the Prophet: For when he beheld the Lord sitting on his Judgment Seat, he was afraid that He would enter into Judgment with him, and then he knew himself to be undone, because he was of polluted Lips.

Although he was called to the Work of a Prophet, he could not but be Conscious to himself, that he had not discharged his Office with such Faithfulness, as to be able to stand before the Lord's Tribunal. To comfort him against these Fears, there was One caused to touch his Lips, with a Coal from the Altar; thereby intimating, That although he had not used his Tongue so much for God, as he should have done, nevertheless, his Iniquity was Consumed, Purged, Pardoned, and that through Jesus Christ, signified by the Altar. This is the first thing in his Sermon.

Secondly, He gives an Account of the Message that he was to deliver to that People, whom the Lord sent him unto. It is God that speaketh it in the 8th Verse, saying, *Whom shall I send, and who shall go up for us?* Whereas it is expressed in the Plural Number, who shall go up for *us*? That implies a Plurality of Persons in the

the Godhead. It is like that Expression, where God saith, *Let us make Man*, Gen. 1. 26. and like that, Gen. 3. 22. *Man is become like one of us*. So when Babel was building, the Lord said, *Let us go down, and confound their Language*, Gen. 11. 7. Thus here, Who shall go for us? God the Father speaks to the Son, and the Holy Ghost, saying, Who shall go for us? Now the Prophet was so affected with the Grace of God, in pardoning the Infirmities of his former Ministry, that he readily saith, *Here am I, send me*. He looked upon himself as under an Obligation to do any Service the Lord should see meet to employ him in, since God had been so Gracious as to forgive his past Iniquity. We have in the Words before us the Message he was to deliver. And it is the saddest Message that ever Man was sent upon. The Prophet, when he heard what he must say, was astonished thereat. He was in the Name of God to declare three Things to the People, who had lived under his Ministry. And we may observe a *Gradation*, in what was to be spoken. 1. He was to tell them from God, that all his Preaching should do them no Good, *Verse 9. Go and tell this People, &c.* It is *Vox indignantis*,

an Expression of Indignation and Contempt the Lord doth not say, Go and tell *my People*, but tell *this People*, this unworthy People, unworthy to be mine any longer; this perverse, obstinate, hard-hearted People, Go and tell them; *See, and perceive not. Hear, and understand not.* The Words in the Original are in the *Imperative Mood*, Do you hear, but do not understand; see you, but perceive not.

It is the manner of the *Hebrews* to express the Future by the Imperative. The meaning is not, That it was their Duty to hear, and not to understand; but that so it should come to pass. The Words are not a Precept, but a Prediction, a Prophecy, foretelling how it should be. I (saith the Prophet) have preached three Sermons to you, and must preach many more, but all will be in vain, you will never be Converted by any thing I can say to you; you will continue in your Sins, as much as if never any Sermon had been preached to you. And this sad thing must I tell you from God. Secondly, He was to tell them that his Ministry would be so far from Converting and Healing them, as that it would have a quite contrary Effect upon them. It would be attended with a *Hardening* and a *Blinding* Efficacy

Efficacy upon their Souls, *ver. 10. Go* (saith the Lord) *and make fat the Heart of this People*; that will be the Fruit of thy Preaching among them, that their Heart will be made Fat, that is to say, Stupid, Senseless, without any feeling; that which is Fat is Senseless. Naturalists observe, that when the Heart is Fat, the Man becomes exceeding Stupid. When Fatness is spoken of the Soul, (as here it is to be so understood) a *Fat Heart* is the same with an *Hard Heart*; and so it is interpreted by the Apostle *John 12. 40. He hath hardened their Heart.* So then this Expression of making the Heart fat, the Apostle expounds, by saying, He hath hardened their Heart. You know Fat, Sewet, or the like, when it grows cold, it becomes stiff and hard, so a fat Heart signifies an hard, an untractable, stiff unyieldable Heart. Make their Heart fat, *and their Ears heavy*, that is to say, Deaf and Dull of Hearing; make a noise in their Ears, that shall deafen them, as the Word implies. Thunder causes Deafness: Thus, when the Holy Prophet thundered Desolating Judgments on this People, it made them the more deaf to all the Calls of Heaven, that at last they were, as if they heard nothing. *And shut their*

their Eyes; which is to be understood of the Eyes of their Mind; that will be the dreadful Consequent of my Preaching to this People, (saith the Prophet) their Eyes will be made blinder than before. A Penal *Occcecation* of Mind, as well as a Penal *Obduration* of Heart, is predicted in these Words. When a Sinner is converted, then his Understanding is enlightned by the Word of God, and his Heart is made Obedient unto that Word, which is directly contrary unto these two Particulars, here predicted, concerning this People. And then Thirdly, He was to tell them one thing more, sadder than all the rest, namely, That these Judgments should be of everlasting Continuance, in *ver. 11.* The Prophet, when he heard what kind of Message he was to go upon, he was astonished and does thereupon speak like a Man confounded, and in great Amazement. What must this be the Fruit of my Ministry *Lord, how long!* Saith he; What, must these Peoples Eyes be blinded, and their Hearts hardned? *Lord, how long!* How long shall these Judgments continue upon them? To be sure the Prophet wished that it might not be long, but the Lord assures him, it would never be otherwise, un-

til such amongst them, as were thus smitten with Spiritual Plagues, were destroy'd. *How long !* The Answer is, *Until the Cities are laid waste, and the Land desolate.* This was fulfilled, 1. When the *Assyrians* came upon them, and laid their Cities waste : And 2. When the *Babylonians* came upon them, utterly consuming all things. *Lastly,* When the Desolating Roman Army burnt their City, and made their Land to be without a Jewish Inhabitant, which was after Christ came into the World, and caused the Gospel to be preached unto them, but they neglected the great Salvation, for which Cause, Wrath is come upon them to the uttermost, they are made most desolate ; and that Desolation hath continued for more than Sixteen Hundred Years ; yea, it doth continue still : And therefore, when it is said, *Until the Cities are laid waste, and the Land be desolate ;* the meaning is not, that after that, they should immediately have their Eyes opened, and their Hearts softened ; for the *Jews* continue Blind until this very Day : This Judgment is yet upon them, as the Apostle does observe, 2 Cor. 3. 15. *A Veil* (meaning Blindness) *is upon their Hearts to this Day ;* they can't see to this Day, and thus

thus it will be with that People until the Fulness of the *Gentiles* shall come in, *Rom. 11. 25. Blindness is happened unto Israel in part, until the fulness of the Gentiles shall come in.* Nor may we suppose that the things here spoken do intend the *Jews* only, but these Words concern all Men that live under the Gospel, and yet continue in their Sins. Gospel Sinners are concerned in them. The Prophet *Isaiah* is of all the Prophets the most *Evangelical*; he speaks more like an Evangelist than a Prophet in many Places, and in some of his Sermons so plainly and clearly concerning Christ, as if he had lived in Christ's time: And it is observable, that these Words are quoted oftner in the New-Testament, than any one Scripture of the Old-Testament. They are mentioned, at least, six times in the New-Testament; all the Evangelists make mention of them. They are moreover recited in the *Acts* of the Apostles, and in the Epistle to the *Romans*, intimating, that Men under the Gospel are very much concerned in what is here predicted. The Words are a Prophecy of God's dealing with Sinners under the Gospel. And as they have been opened, they afford unto us a very awful Doctrine, which is,

Doct.

Doct. *That some who live under the Gospel, are by the Lord in Righteous Judgment, given up to Everlasting Hardness of Heart, and Blindness of Mind.*

For clearing the Doctrine before us, Three Things may be enquired into. 1. How the Lord is said to Harden the Hearts, and Blind the Eyes of Men? 2. What are the Signs of Men's being, by a Judicial Dispensation of God, given up to those Spiritual Judgments? 3. Whence it comes to pass, that some are so?

Quest. I. *How is the Lord said to Harden the Hearts, and Blind the Minds of Men?*

Take the Answer in these following Conclusions.

Concl. I. *As Hardness and Blindness in the Souls of Men is a sinful Thing, so it is not from God; for God did not make Man with an Hard Heart, or a Blind Mind, Eccl. 7. ult. God made Man upright. There was an Universal Rectitude in all the Faculties of his Soul, as it first came out of God's Hands. Therefore He did not make him*
with

with a Blind Mind, or Hard Heart; He made Man after his own Image; therefore his Soul was full of Divine Light. God doth not make Men to be Sinners, either as to Original or Actual Sin. *Jam. 1. 13. Let no Man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God, for God cannot be tempted with Evil, neither tempteth He any Man.* He doth not put any Man upon sinning; the Sins of Men must be ascribed to other things, as the Cause and Authors thereof, and not unto the Holy and Glorious God. *1 John 2. 16. The Lust of the Flesh, the Lust of the Eye, and the Pride of Life, is not of the Father, but of the World.* So Blindness of Mind, and Hardness of Heart, consider'd, as a Sinful thing, is not of the Father, but of another Original. Sin is called the Work of the Devil, *1 John 3. 8. Christ said to the Jews, the Devil is a Liar, and the Father of it; that is, the Author of it. John 8. 44.* So Hardness of Heart, and Blindness of Mind, is from the Devil, *2 Cor. 4. 4. The God of this World hath blinded the Minds of them that Believe not.* And it is from themselves, that they are become thus Sinful. Their Corruptions and Sins are their own Lusts, their own Doings, their own Ways, their own Iniquities

quities. God saith plainly, they are none of His; but Men have them from the Devil, and from themselves. The Lord doth not approve of Men's being Wicked, or of their having Blind Minds or Hard Hearts, *Psal. 5. 4. For thou art not a God, that hast Pleasure in Wickedness*; when it is said, *God hath not Pleasure in Wickedness*, there is more intended than expressed; the meaning is, that he hates it Infinitely and Eternally. *Jerem. 44. 4. Ob! do not this abominable thing that I hate*; Sin is the abominable thing which the Lord doth hate: Therefore it is not from Him, He never did, nor indeed can He approve of any Sin; it is inconsistent with the Holiness of His Nature; He can no more approve of Sin, than He can cease to be God; for if he should approve of Sin, then he He would cease to be Holy, and then he would be God no longer, than which nothing can be imagin'd more impossible, *Hab. 1. 13. Thou art of purer Eyes, than to behold Evil, and canst not look upon Iniquity*. God cannot behold Sin with any Approbation, or without Detestation of it. The Apostle *James* proveth, that God cannot be the Author of Sin, from that Attribute of his Immutability, because He is of an Eternally unchangeable Nature.

Nature. He sheweth, that God is the *Gi-
ver of every good Gift, and that with Him
there is no Variableness, nor Shadow of
Turning*, Jam. 1. 17. Saith the Apostle,
every thing that is Good comes from
God; if the Evil of Sin should be from
Him; He would be variable and mutable
as all Creatures are, when as absolute, Im-
mutability is a Property of the Divine Na-
ture; so then, God is not the Author of Sin,
or of Hardness of Heart, or of Blindness of
Mind, considered as a Sin. Nevertheless,

Concl. II. *This Hardness and Blindness
is not without a Divine Permission.* No
Sinner has his Heart turn'd into a Stone,
or the Eyes of his Soul put out, but by the
Permission of Heaven. As no Temporal
Judgment befalls any Man without Divine
Permission, so neither doth any Spiritual
Judgment seize upon the Souls of these and
those without Divine Permission. God
could, if He did see meet, prevent this
Blindness and Hardness, and could cure it;
He is able to do it. *Job* said, Chap. 42. 2.
Thou canst do every thing; He that can do
every thing, can break an Hard Heart, and
heal a Blind Soul; He that can do every
thing, can do that. Such is the Power of
God,

God, as that He can turn Hell into Heaven, and open the Eyes of the Blind, and cause the darkest Soul in the World to see clearly. 2 Cor. 4. 6. *God that commandeth Light to shine out of Darkness, hath shined into our Hearts.* The Heart that is dark as Hell, God can shine into it, and make it become full of Glorious Light; the Omnipotent Arm of God is able to break the hardest Hearts in the World, although no Man, no Angel in Heaven can do it. The Almighty God can turn an Heart of Stone into an Heart of Flesh when he pleases: And God sometimes hath done it; He hath suffered some of His own Elect to be hardened and blinded to a very prodigious Degree; and yet after that, opened their Eyes, and broke their hard Hearts. So it was with *Manasseh*; the Scripture intimates what a Bloody hard-hearted Sinner *Manasseh* was. And the *Jews* have a Tradition, that this Prophet *Isaiah*, being King *Manasseh*'s near Kinsman, was, whilst yet alive, by the Command of the King, sawn asunder with a Wooden Saw. It is thought by Judicious Interpreters, that the Apostle alludes to that very thing in *Heb. 11. 37.* when he speaks of some that had been *sawn asunder*: And yet this *Manasseh*, tho'

a most cruel hard-hearted Tyrant, had his Heart broken. God did break it, and make another kind of Heart of it. So the Apostle *Paul*, before his Conversion, his Mind was blinded, and Heart hardned to a very high degree, *Acts 9. 1.* *He breathed out Slaughter against the Church of God.* he made no more to kill a good Christian, than the Papists do at this Day, who say, some of them, that it is no more Sin to kill a Protestant, than to kill a Dog; so *Paul* was so blinded, as to think, that to kill Christians, was no more than to kill the vilest Vermine on the Earth. Thus was he hardned, and yet for all this, the exceeding abundant Grace of God opened his Eyes, and broke his Heart, that he became one of the most broken-hearted Christians that ever was in the World. These things shew, that when Men are blinded and hardned in the Ways of Sin, it does not come to pass, without a Divine Permission. It is not inconsistent with the Holiness and Glory of God to permit Sin and Sinners to be in the World. If Men will Sin, and ruin themselves, what Obligation is there on God to hinder them? When He resolves to permit them to Sin, and to harden their own Hearts, and blind their own Eyes. H

know

knows that it will occasion more Glory to His Name, than if it were otherwise. As Christ said concerning the Man that was Born Blind, *John 9. 4.* It was, *that the Works of God, should be made manifest in him.* It was, that so God might have Glory, by working a miraculous Cure on a Man that was Born Blind. God would have more Glory by that Man, than if he never had been Blind. So God will have more Glory, than if there had never been an hard Heart, or a blind Mind in the World. As for the Elect of God, the Glory of Divine Grace will be made manifest in them, and the Power of God, in working a miraculous Cure upon their Souls, in Converting, and so Healing them. The Glory of pardoning Mercy had never been discovered, if there had never been a Sinner in the World. And as for Reprobates, God will have Glory in their Destruction, because of their Obstinacy against all the Calls of God unto Repentance, *Prov. 16. 4.* *God hath made all things for himself; even the Wicked for the Day of Evil.* All are for the Glory of God, one way or another, -either in, their Conversion and Salvation, or else in their Obduration, and everlasting Destruction. Men and Angels had never seen such a Glorious

rious Demonstration of the Justice and Holy Wrath of God, as now they will see to a Eternity, if there had never been an hard Heart, or blind Mind in the World. *Then* God permits this to be. But this is not all.

Concl. III. The Righteous God does not barely permit this Blindness and Hardness but hath an Active Providence therein.

To affirm that the Providence of God is Passive or Permissive only, as to the Sins of Men, in Effect to deny Providence, as to that Matter, but that the Lord hath an Active Providence hereabout is evident from several things.

1. In that there is an Holy Eternal Decree concerning whatever comes to pass in this World. God hath determined with himself who shall be smitten with this Judgment who they are that Spiritual Plagues shall come upon; and He hath determined how long they shall continue under those Plagues as the Scripture before us shews. There is an Holy Decree, both as to the Fruition of the Evil, and as to the Degree and Measure of it. That some Sinners shall be under a greater Darkness and Hardness, than others shall. It was prodigious Hardness of Heart

which

which the *Jews* were subject unto, when they Crucified the Son of God. Considering how many Miracles were wrought to convince them that He was the true *Messiah*. Nevertheless, in so doing, they fulfilled the Counsels of Heaven, which made that unparallel'd Sin of theirs an Occasion of the Salvation of the World. *Acts* 2. 23. *Him being delivered by the determinate Counsel, and Fore-knowledge of God, you have taken, and with wicked Hands have Crucified and Slain.* So in *Acts* 4. 27, 28. The Apostle declares, that what *Herod* and *Pilate* did in Crucifying the Lord Jesus Christ, was, *what the Hand and Counsel of God had determined should be done.* so that there was an Holy Decree, and therefore an active Providence therein.

2. It is evident in that *Hardness of Heart is a Judgment from God.* This Obduration falls under a double Consideration; either as *Moral Evil*, in which Respect it is not from God, as you heard; or as a *Penal Evil*, so it is from Him; for though Sin is Evil, the Punishment of Sin is good, and therefore from God, the Author of all Good. God never punisheth Sin more dreadfully, than when He punisheth one Sin with another. A Sinful Creature provokes

vokes God by finning; it may be he make himself drunk, or guilty of vile Uncleaness. Now (saith God) to be revenge of that Sinner, I will leave him to commit that Sin over and over again, and he shall be blinded and hardened thereby. *Hof.*

11. *Because Ephraim hath made many Altars to Sin, Altars shall be unto him to Sin.* Ephraim hath sinned, by making an Altar now then to punish him, I will leave him to make many more Altars, and to commit that Sin again, and again, and again, many times over, that so he may become Sinful and Guilty, and Damned with a Vengeance. Thus, *Rom. 1. 28.* the Apostle notes concerning the *Gentiles*, that God gave them up to a *Reprobate Mind*, that they should commit the most horrid Sins in the World without any Remorse: This Plague of an hard Heart, and a blind Mind was inflicted on them as a just Punishment, and as the Vengeance of God upon them for Sins against the Light of Nature, which they had been guilty of.

3. *The Scripture is exceeding clear and express concerning this, that there is more than a Permissive Providence of God about the Sins of Men.* This we see in the sixth Part of that Platform of Prayer, which Christ hath

given

given us, *Matth. 6. 13.* He hath taught us to pray, *Lead us not into Temptation;* so that Men are sometimes by the Holy Providence of God lead into Temptation. When the Ten Tribes revolted from the House of *David*; they sinned in what they did, and yet the Lord saith, *This thing is from me,* *1 Kings 12. 23.* God had an Holy Providence in it to punish the People for the Sins they had been guilty of in *Solomon's* Time, and to punish *Solomon's* Son for his Father's Iniquity. So when the *Arabians* and other Enemies came and plundered the Cities of *Judah*, and carried all before them, they did Evil, and yet it is said, *the Lord stirred them up,* *2 Chron. 21. 16.* They did it for wicked Ends, but the Lord did it to punish a Sinful People for their Iniquities. When the Ten Kings gave their Power unto the Beast, they sinned in what they did; and yet it is said, *Rev. 17. 17. God put it into their Hearts to fulfil his Will.* In agreeing to give their Power to the Beast; they fulfilled His Decree: And God ordered all by His Providence; this and the other thing happen'd, by Means whereof their Hearts were inclined to do that Evil. When *Joseph's* Brethren cast him into the Pit, their Hearts were exceedingly hardned; He

He cried, but *they were not grieved at the Afflictions of Joseph* (as the Prophet speaks alluding to that) they went to Eat and Drink, and were Merry. So when they sold him into *Egypt*, they did wickedly, and yet *Joseph* said, *Gen. 45. 8. God sent me hither*: It was not you, Brethren, but God did it; you intended it for Evil, but God intended it for Good. God (saith he) had an Hand in all those Calamities and Afflictions that besel me, and all for Good, to save my Father's Family from Ruin, and a Nation from Perishing. God had, not a bare Permission, but an Active Hand therein: So it is said expressly in the Scriptures, as to this that concerns the hardening of the Hearts of Men. *The Lord said, I will harden the Heart of Pharaoh. Exod. 7. 3. And Isaiah 63. 17. the Lord's People complain, Why hast thou caused us to err from thy Ways, and hardened our Hearts from thy fear?* So when the Egyptians were set against God's People, it is said, *Psal. 105. 25. That God turned their Heart to hate his People.* The Egyptians did wickedly; aye, but God had an Holy Design in giving them up to so great a Sin as that was. This is a very mysterious Subject. It is thought by some, that one of those Mysteries that *Paul*

heard

heard discoursed of in the Third Heaven, when caught up thither, was this very Matter? How far God hath an Hand in hardening the Hearts, and blinding the Minds of Men; of which he saith, that Men, in a State of Infirmary, cannot utter it. This is a Mystery, which we are not able to comprehend; and therefore I shall not determine how far the Glorious Holy One does act in hardening the Hearts, and blinding the Minds of Sinners; nevertheless several things relating to this Subject are clear from the Scripture.

I. *God hardens the Hearts of Men, by departing from them, and withholding his Grace from their Souls.* I remember *Au-*
stin gives this Answer to that Question; *How does God harden the Hearts of Men?* He does it not, *Infundendo malitiam, sed non infundendo gratiam.* He doth it not by putting Sin into their Hearts, but by not giving Grace to them. He does it by departing from them, which He may do. God is not bound to give Grace to Sinners: And if He withhold His Grace, their Hearts will be hard; as if the Sun should depart from the World, what Horror of Darkness would cover the Earth; so when God departs from Sinners, what Horror of Darkness seizeth upon their Souls? When the Sun is

gone in some Parts of the World, those Parts that are near unto the Poles, they are in Darknes for many Weeks and Months together; all is Darknes, and all things cold and frozen there. Should the Sun never return with its enlightning warming Influences, there would never be any Light, nor any thing but Cold and Darknes there. So it is when God departs from a Soul, and never returns to that Soul again, he is wholly blinded and hardned. When God departs, then the Word of God does no Good, and Ordinances and Providences do no Good. God does not speak by them when He is departed and gone. It is with such Sinners, as it was with miserable *Saul*, *1 Sam. 15. 28.* *God is departed from me, and answers me not, either by Prophet, or Dream;* even so, when God is departed, then neither Prophet, nor Sermon, nor any thing else, reaches the Heart of a Sinner; He is not at all softened or melted thereby. There is a Presence of God that some Reprobate Sinners experience, whence their Minds are enlightned, and they have Meltings of Heart sometimes; but they sin and provoke God, and He departs from 'em, and doth withhold those Enlightnings and Meltings they have sometimes had, and then they become exceeding hard. They have exceedingly provoked the
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the Lord; and therefore He doth not only withhold his special Grace, but takes from them that common Grace they once had Experience of.

2. *The Providence of God so orders it sometimes, that hardening Temptations shall be set before them.* As Men lay Ratsbane before Vermine, or as a Master lays Money in the Way of his Servant, to try his Fidelity, so the Holy God deals with Sinners. Temptations to Sin become the Bane of many a Soul. It may be God in His Providence so orders, that a sinful Creature shall become acquainted with those that shall harden his Heart, with some ungodly Companions, who will blind His Mind, and prejudice him against the Holy Ways of God, that so way may be made for his Destruction. Thus it was with *Ahaziah*, although he was the Grandson of a most Pious and Eminent Man, the Holy Providence of God did so order, that that young Man must fall into Acquaintance with the House of *Ahab*. And the Lord did it, that way might be made for the Destruction of the young Man, whose Sins had exceedingly provoked him, *2 Chron.* 22. 4. *They were his Counsellors unto his Destruction.* *Ahaziah* had sinned and provoked

voked God, and the Divine Providence so disposeth, as that he must fall into a Companionship with those that would harden his Heart, and ruin his Soul. And the Holy Providence of God orders Stumbling-Blocks to be cast before the Souls of Men. Thus *Jeremiah* 6. 21. *I will lay a Stumbling-Block before this People, they shall fall upon them, the Neighbour and his Friend shall perish.* Temptations will prove Stumbling-Blocks to Reprobate Sinners, on which they shall fall and perish. God in His Providence so orders it, that many a Sinner shall be assaulted with those Temptations that he is least able to resist; that the outward Temptation shall be such, as suits with the inward Corruption of his Heart; so it was with *Achan*, he was a Covetous Man, and now the Holy Providence of God brings into his Sight that which took with his covetous Heart, for a Wedge of Gold, and a *Babylonish* Garment shall be set before him, and his Heart hardened, and Mind blinded with the Temptation. And so it was with *Judas*; he was a Covetous Man, and the Providence of God so orders it, that he must keep the Bag, and play the Thief. So with *Herod*, God orders it, that there must be an *Herodias*,
for

for that Lascivious Man; and his Heart so hardned, that *John Baptist* could not soften it by his Powerful Ministry. When *Pharaoh's* Heart was hardned, what Temptations did the Holy God throw in his Way, that he might be hardned. God suffers the *Magicians* to delude him with false Miracles, whereby his Heart was hardned; and God suffer'd others to come to him, and give him bad Counsel, when he had Thoughts of letting *Israel* go. Some perswaded him, that he had not done wisely in that Matter, to let so many Slaves go from under his Power, and that Counsel proved an hardening Temptation to *Pharaoh*, to his utter Ruin and Desolation. So *Jereboam* was hardned to his Ruin by an awful Temptation. There comes a Prophet from God, and tells him how the Lord was provok'd with him, and would surely punish him. And now a sad Providence falls out; as for the Prophet, before he got home, a Lion meets him, and kills him, 1 *Kin.* 12. 33. After this thing *Jereboam* returned not from his Evil Ways; he was hardned by the Providence which happen'd. That the Prophet, which had deliver'd such a Message in the Name of the Lord, should be so expos'd by the Providence of

God, that a Lion should kill him ere he comes home. This hardned that King's Heart; but there was an Holy Hand of God in this Matter. When the *Jews* persisted in their Infidelity, in not owning Jesus Christ to be the true *Messiah*; the Holy God did order very great Temptations to be set before them, which were an Occasion of their being blinded and hardned. One Temptation was, that none of the Great Men, and Wise Men, and such as were reputed to be Religious, none of these believed in Christ. *John 7.48. Do any of the Rulers or Pharisees believe in him?* This was a mighty Temptation to the common People. Moreover, Christ was mean as to His Outward Condition; He came in the Form of a Servant; this was a Temptation to the *Jews*, who had quite contrary Expectations, *Mat. 13. 35. They said, Is not this the Carpenter's Son, and is not His Mother Mary? And they were offended at him.* They made account, that when the *Messiah* came into the World, He would be a Rich Man, and come glittering in Outward Pomp, and Splendor, and Worldly Glory. When they saw his Mother was only a poor Pious Woman, and his supposed Father was only a *Mechanic*, their Hearts were hardned: And God had

had an Holy Providence in it, that so the Words of my Text might be fulfilled. Yea, and there are several things come to pass in the World, by Occasion whereof Millions of Reprobates are Eternally hardned unto the Destruction and Desolation of their Souls. As now, the Prosperity that attends wicked Men; they prosper in the World; they are Richer and Greater than other Men oft-times; *that is an hardning Temptation to the World, Mal. 3. 14, 15. It is vain to serve the Lord, say they, and what Profit is there, that we do keep His Ordinances, and walk mournfully before Him? The Proud are Happy, and they that do wickedly are set up.* Proud wicked Men are in a happy Condition; therefore they say, it is in vain to serve the Lord. Just as some now say, there is such a Man never prays in his Family, and yet he lives as well as any other; why then should we pray? And such a Man, when he goes to Sea, he never prays with his Ships Company, and yet he makes as happy Voyages as those that do pray; therefore it is in vain for to pray. Alas, you little think that Providence orders such things to come to pass, that wicked and wretched Sinners might be hardned and damn'd for their Neglects of God. Another

ther thing which happens in the World, which proves an hardning Temptation to many lost Souls, is the Scandalous Miscarriage of Professors of Religion, *Matth. 18. 7. Wo to the World, because of Offences.* There is a Man that hath made a Glorious Profession; he pretended to much Strictness and Piety, but for all that, was secretly Vile and Unclean in the Sight of God; Wo to the World, because of that Man. For the World will be ready conclude, that Religion is a Cheat, that all Professors are alike; that because some are Hypocrites, all are so. But that which is the saddest Temptation of all, is, God sometimes leaves his own Children, and then they fall into Scandalous Sins. There is a dreadful Providence in it, that so Reprobates may be hardned, and damn'd. Oh! how many Thousands hath one such Instance been the Occasion of Ruin to! That of *David*, how many Thousands have perished eternally, because of his Sin! The Antients tell us, That some of the *Pagans* of old were prejudiced against Religion, because they were inform'd of *David's* Miscarriage. They would reason after this manner. The Christians say, *David* was one of their Saints, and yet they confess, that he was guilty of Murder, and

and Adultery, and Drunkenness. We will never be of the Religion that such are of; and do we not see at this Day, *David's* Sin ruins many a Soul? Ungodly Men will say, *David* committed such and such Sins, and for all that he went to Heaven, and therefore we may do as he did, and yet be saved. Oh! but they consider not *David's* broken Bones for his Sins. Tho' *David* himself is now a Glorified Saint in Heaven, I am perswaded that his Sin hath been the Occasion of the hardning, and so of the Damnation of more than a Million of Souls.

3. *The Holy God hardens the Hearts, and blinds the Eyes of Sinners, by delivering them into the Hands of Satan.* When *Sampson* sinn'd, a provoked God deliver'd him into the Hands of the *Philistines*; and they put his Eyes out: So when Men sin, God delivers them into the Hands of the *Philistines* of Hell, and they blind them. So *Zedekiah* sinn'd, and the Anger of the Lord deliver'd him into the Hands of the King of *Babylon*, who made him blind. Thus Men sin against God, and He delivers them into the Hand of Satan, and one of the first things the Devil does to them, is to put their Eyes out. 2 Cor. 4. 4. *The God of*

this World hath blinded the Eyes of them that believe not; when he gets them into his Hands, He will do that besure. The Judge giveth the Malefactor into the Hands of the Jaylor; God, as a Righteous Judge, delivers Sinners into the Hands of the Jaylor of Hell. The Prophet saw God sitting on the Throne of Judgment, and He delivered the *Jews* into the Hands of Satan, who did blind their Eyes, and harden their Hearts. Satan does it *Morally*, by perswading to Sin; God does it *Judicially*, by delivering into his Hands. And thus it was with *Ahab*, 1 Kings 22. 22. The Prophet saw *the Lord on His Throne, and the Host of Heaven standing by Him*; and the Lord said *Who shall perswade Ahab? Who will harden his Heart, that he may go to Ramoth Gilead, and there perish? There comes a Devil, and saith, I will do it. Wilt thou do it, says God? Thou that art a Devil how wilt thou do it? I will go and be a Lying Spirit in the Mouth of all his Prophets. Go thy ways, says God; thou shalt perswade him, and prevail also; Go forth and do so.* Thus the Righteous God delivers Sinners into the Hands of Satan to harden and blind them. So with *Saul*, 1 Sam. 16. 14. *The Lord departed from Saul, and*

an evil Spirit from the Lord troubled him. The Lord lets loose a Devil upon him; and when the Devil was let loose upon him, what an hard-hearted wicked Creature was *Saul*? He would stick at no manner of Wickedness; when the evil Spirit was upon him, he would kill his Son-in-Law, and his own Son too. An evil Spirit from the Lord was upon him, as a Punishment for his Sins, and then his Mind was blinded, and his Heart hardned.

4. *The Lord blinds the Eyes, and hardens the Hearts of Men, by giving them up to Sin, to the Lusts and Corruptions of their own Hearts.* Sin is the Poyson that puts out the Eyes of the Soul, and turns the Hearts of Men into a very Rock; *Heb. 3. 13.* Take heed, lest any of you be hardned through the Deceitfulness of Sin. The more Men sin, the harder will their Hearts be. God leaves them to sin, as a Punishment for former Sins, whereby they have provoked him; so do their Hearts become exceeding hard. Thus it was with the Carnal Israelites, *Psal. 81. 12.* The Lord gave them up to their own Hearts Lusts, and then their Hearts were hardned with a Vengeance. There is no Reprobate in the World, but one Sin or other he is under the Dominion of;

of; and God, to punish him, suffers it so to be, and suffers him to fall into that Sin often, that so his Heart may be hardned. One Man indulges himself in the Sin of Pride, in Proud, Boasting, Vain-glorious Words, or in proud Fashions, as to Apparel, or in Spiritual Pride, and for this his Heart is hardned. *Dan. 5. 20.* It is said of *Nebuchadnezzar*, *his Mind was hardned in Pride.* Another is under the Dominion of an unclean Lust; and because he is abhorred of the Lord, God in His sorest Wrath gives him up to that Sin. God saith, as in *Rev. 22. 11.* *He that is filthy, let him be filthy still;* and then his Heart will be hardned still, and his Mind will be blinded still. The Sin of *Uncleanness* is a besotting Sin; it makes Sots and Beasts of Men. Some there are that know they live in Sin, but there are others who don't know it, yet their miserable Souls are held fast in the Invisible Chains of Darknes, in secret Distempers, that they will never see, till 'tis too late to repent of them, and so their Souls are hardned, blinded, lost, damned for ever, *Prov. 14. 12.* *There is a Way that seems right to a Man, but the end thereof is Death.* God be merciful to Sinful Creatures, when it is so with them! They think
they

they are in the right Way, but are in the Way to Everlasting Death. They live in Sin, and don't know it. There is a Generation that is pure in their own Eyes, and yet are not cleansed from their Filthiness. God be merciful to 'em, the Plague of a blind Mind and an hard Heart is upon 'em, and is like to be their Ruin. Thus we see how God hardens the Hearts of Men.

One Word of Improvement.

We see here an Answer to that great Question; *How long are we like to suffer under those Temporal Judgments, which New-England is bleeding under?* When will they be removed in Mercy, or how long are they like to continue? Here is the Answer, as long as the Hearts of Men are blinded and hardned: Until they have their Eyes opened, and see how they have offended God, and their Hearts melted for it. And how long shall this be? Lord, how long! How long? Shall it be until the Towns in *New-England* be laid waste, and they become Desolate without an *English* Inhabitant! Believe it, Sirs, outward Judgment will never be removed in Mercy, until Spiritual Judgments be removed. If outward Judgments be removed, and Spiritual

ritual Judgments remain, or come in the room of the other, that will be a Thousand times more dreadful. We have no Reason to expect, that God will put up His Sword, until Men are brought to see what He contends with them for. Would you know why these Judgments are continued so long? Would you know why *New-England* hath been from Year to Year under the amazing Hand of Heaven? A Prophet has told you the reason, *Jerem. 44. 10. They are not humbled unto this Day*: Alas, for the People of *New-England*, they are not humbled unto this Day! Therefore the Hand of the Lord lies heavy upon them still. You would fain see an end of these Judgments and Days of Peace again. If you would, I must tell you from the Lord what you must do. O pray to God, that Spiritual Judgments may be removed, and Outward Judgments will be so too. God will soon turn His Hand upon the Heathen, and restore Peace unto His People. *Psalms 81. 13, 14, 15. Oh that my People had hearkned unto me! I would have soon subdued their Enemies, and the Haters of the Lord should have submitted themselves to Him: But their Time should have endured for ever.*

We proceed unto the Second Particular to be enquired into, namely,

What are the Signs of Men's being given up to Judicial Hardness of Heart, and Blindness of Mind?

For answer, this must be premised, *That it cannot ordinarily be known, that this or that Man is under that Judicial Hardness, which is a Reprobating Judgment.* There is an Everlasting Obduration, which none but Reprobate Sinners are the Subjects of: None but *Vessels of Wrath*, who are made for Dishonour and Destruction, as the Apostle shews, *Rom. 9. 22.* But this cannot be ordinarily discerned; for the Elect of God do some of them remain under dreadful Hardness and Blindness, and that for a long time. It was shew'd the last Opportunity, that *Manasseh* and *Paul* were under prodigious Hardness of Heart, and for all that, *Vessels of Mercy* both of them. And thus it was with some Thousands of those *Jews*, who had an Hand in Crucifying the Son of God, *Acts 2. 22, 23.* The Apostle speaking to those very Men who Crucified the Lord Jesus Christ, tells them, that Jesus of Nazareth was a Man approved of God, by Signs and Miracles, as, says he, *You yourselves also know, and Him have you taken, and with wicked*

wicked Hands crucified and slain. Now that was a most prodigious Hardness of Heart in them; that when the Lord Jesus was known to be approved of God; and when there were Signs and Miracles from Heaven wrought before their Eyes to convince them that Jesus of *Nazareth* was the true Messiah, yet that they should lay their Hands on him, and Crucifie and Murder him: Yet these Men, Thousands of them, who had their Hearts thus hardned, had them softened afterwards. *Peter's* Sermon pricked them at the Heart. There was a time, when nothing would reach their Hearts; but when God's Time for their Conversion was come, their Hearts were broken: They became Penitent Believers, trusting in Him for the Eternal Salvation of their Souls, whom their bloody Hands had Murther'd. It cannot then ordinarily be known who are the Subjects of Divine Reprobation: Men cannot know themselves to be Reprobate, much less can they know others to be so. *Rom.* 11. 34. *Who hath known the Mind of the Lord, or who hath been His Counsellor? Who was there with God before the World began, when the Book of Life was written to advise Him whose Names he should set down in that Book. Only in one Case this*
may

may be known, that is, when a Sinner is left of God to commit the Sin against the Holy Ghost. For although God's Elect may commit all other Sins, they may fall into the most grievous and horrid Sins that possibly can be, nevertheless, as to that particular Sin God preserves them from it, who belong unto his Election of Grace. *Matth. 12. 31, 32. All manner of Sin and Blasphemy shall be forgiven unto Men, but the Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven.* Some commit that Sin, and that they may be known to be such, is evident from what the Apostle *John* speaks, *John 5. 16. There is a Sin unto Death, I do not say that you should pray for it.* His Meaning is, You may by no means pray for those that have sinned that Sin which is unto Death. Such a Caution would be in vain, if none there were that did ever commit that Sin, or that could be known to have committed it. Now this Case only excepted, a Man cannot be known to be under Eternal Reprobation and Obduration. This notwithstanding, there are some concerning whom, there is sad cause to fear, lest it should be so with them, dreadful Signs of Judicial Blindness and Hardness are upon them. And who are they?

Answer

Answer 1. *When Sinful Creatures are not Converted, but grow worse and worse under precious Means of Grace; they have cause to fear, lest the Judgment here in the Text be inflicted on them.* This is intimated in the Words before us, *Shut their Eyes make their Hearts fat, (or hard)- lest they should be converted and healed.* So that Men are under Penal Blindness and Hardness, *Isaiah's Ministry* will never convert them; and if they be not converted by such a Ministry as that, it is a sad Sign that they are under a Judicial Dispensation. When Sinners are become Sermon-proof that no Arrows that can be shot by the Bow of the Gospel can pierce them, when no Bullet can wound their Heart for them that argues, that they are overgrown with desperate Hardness. When all the Pain that can be taken with them to reform and refine them, is but Labour lost, and spent in vain, it is a fearful Symptom, *Jerem. 6. two last Verses. The Bellows are burnt (says the Prophet) the Founder melteth in vain. Reprobate Silver shall Men call them the Lord hath rejected them.* It is a sad Sign, that Sinful Creatures are rejected of the Lord, and that they are Reprobate Silver, when the Bellows are burnt, and the Founde

Founder melts in vain: When God and his Servants take Pains with them for their Conversion, and all in vain. The Ministry which they have lived under hath had an Eminency in it. It has been a very Spiritual Ministry, with which there has been a great Presence of God, and yet Sinners remain unconverted and hardened in their Sins still; it is a very ill Sign. So it was with the *Jews*, whom this Text has Reference to. The Lord sent extraordinary Men of God among them, to preach to them; Men of extraordinary Gifts. He sent Prophets to them, and Apostles to them, and at last the Son of God himself appear'd in Flesh, and became their Minister; for which Cause it is said of Christ, that he was a *Minister of the Circumcision*, Rom. 15. 8. for that he preached the Gospel to the *Jews*, who are called the Circumcision, but many of them who sat under it were never Converted by that Ministry. If the Lord does furnish a People with Variety of Means and Spiritual Gifts, for the Good of their Souls, sending Messenger after Messenger, with Variety of Gifts, and much of His Spirit with them, and in them, but all their Labour proves ineffectual, it is a sad sign of Judicial Obduration. Thus it was with the *Jews*, Jer. 25. 4.

I have sent all my Servants the Prophets, rising early, and sending them. The Lord sent them all one after another. There are above Twenty Prophets, whose Names are mentioned in the Scripture, that God did send to Convince and Convert that People but all their Sermons could do no Good upon them. There are some, and many that live under the Gospel, with whom it is, as the Prophet speaks concerning the Barren Heath in the Wilderness, *Jerem. 17. 6* *It sees not Good, when Good comes.* There comes Good, there comes Rain from Heaven, and falls on the Heath, but it is not bettered; it is not made Fruitful by the Good that comes upon it. So it is with the Desert Souls of many; their Souls are like the parched Wilderness. Good comes to them, and yet they see not Good; the Dews of the Gospel descend upon them. God causeth the Rain of His Word to come down, the Show'rs of Heaven come down upon their Souls every Lord's Day; for all that they see not Good, they are not made fruitful no more than the Barren Wilderness. That is a Sign that their Souls are under the Curse, and that Spiritual Plagues are upon them. Much more is it a sad Symptom, when Sinful Creatures, instead of be-

ing Converted, become more Sinful and Hard-hearted, under the Means of Grace, when 'tis with them, as it is said of the poor Woman, *Mark* 5. 26. that she had spent all her Estate on the Physicians, and *was nothing better'd, but rather grew worse.* Thus when Spiritual Physicians have done their best for the Healing the Soul of a Sinner, and he is nothing *better'd, but rather worse,* this is a doleful Sign indeed; that Soul is in a dangerous State, nothing but a Miracle can save him; yet so it is with some that enjoy the Gospel, and the Ordinances of it. Hence the Apostle said to the *Corinthians*, *You come together, not for the better, but for the worse,* 1 Cor. 11. They were not (some of them) the better for Sermons and Sacraments, but the worse; their Hearts more hardned, and their Minds blinded. The blessed Ordinances of the Gospel had, through their own default, an hardening and blinding Efficacy upon their Souls. It is a sad thing, when the Word of God hath no other Effect upon men, but to draw forth their Corruptions, that it doth but occasion them to sin against God. As some Hearers of the Word, what they do? They will blaspheme the Word, and revile the Dispensers of it, and that

that is all the Good they get by it. So was with the *Jews* at *Antioch*, *Acts* 13. 45. when *Paul* preached the Gospel, they Contradicted and Blasphemed; this was all the Good they got. This argues desperate Hardness of Heart.

2. *When Men are not Reformed by awful Judgments of God, that is a Sign that they are Blinded and Hardned.* Who are more blind than they that will not see. Now when Men are not Reformed and Converted from their Sins, although the Hand of Divine Judgments is lifted up over them, it is because they will not see. *Isaiah* 2. 10, 11. *Lord, when thy Hand is lifted up they will not see: They will not behold the Majesty of the Lord.* There is a Divine Majesty discovered in awful Judgments; the Glory of the Divine Attributes shines brightly, when it is so; it is because Men will not behold the Majesty of the Lord, when they do not see the Glory of the Lord therein; they might easily see, but they will not see. Thus it is with many that are judicially given up to Spiritual Plagues; God's Controversie with a People (and so with particular Persons) is written in Legible Characters on those Judgments which he does execute upon them, *Psal.* 9. 16.

argues great Hardness of Heart, when Men are not awakned and reformed by the Judgments of God upon others round about them. A Malefactor that sees others executed before his Eyes, and yet shall continue at the same time to commit those very Crimes that he sees others punished for, is surely an hard-hearted Creature. So it is when Men persist in their Sins, notwithstanding the Execution done on their Neighbours. They see God killing their Neighbours for those very Sins which they themselves have been guilty of, and yet they will go on in them, and do not fear; that shews, that they have sottish stupid Hearts, that their Hearts are made fat. It is said, *Amos 3. 8. The Lion hath roared, and who will not fear?* So when the Judgments of the Lord are abroad in the Earth, especially when they come near to us, the Lion hath roared. Now if there are no Tremblings of Heart, there is woful Hardness. Thus it was with the two Tribes; they saw the Judgments of God upon their Brethren and Neighbours, and yet they were fearless and senseless, and went on, committing those very Sins, by which those Neighbours of theirs were destroyed before their Eyes, *Jer. 3. 8. I, with the Lord, gave a Bill of Divorse to Samaria,*

Samaria, yet her treacherous-Sister Judah feared not, but went and played the Harlot. Judah saw the Fury of the Lord pour'd down from Heaven upon the Ten Tribes, yet feared not, but went on to commit Spiritual Whoredom, went on in those very Sins that God had destroy'd others for. And just so it has been with Apostate Christians in the latter Ages of the World, as the Scriptures did foretel that it would be. The Churches in Asia have been destroy'd in special for that Sin in Idolatry, for their worshipping of Graven Images; the Lord hath deliver'd them into the Hands of the Turks, under whom they have been in Slavery, for Ages one after another. The Christians in the West had seen those Horrible Desolations and yet repented not. Thus have we seen the Divine Oracle fulfilled. Rev. 9. 20. The rest of the Men that were not killed by those Plagues, yet repented not of their Works, that they should not worship Idols. Although the Papists in the West have seen what God hath done to the Christian Nations for their Worshipping Idols, yet they do not repent, but live in that very Sin. It is because God hath given them up to Penal Blindness of Mind, and Hardness of Heart. Much more when the Judgments of Heaven

ven light upon Men themselves, if they are not awakned and reformed thereby, it shews that their Hearts are dreadfully hardned. Thus it was with this People whom the Text before us speaks of, as an Effect and sad Sign of their Obduration. *Isai. 42. 24, 25. Who gave Jacob to the Spoil, and Israel to the Robbers? Did not the Lord, He against whom we have sinned? He kindled a Fire upon them, but they knew it not, and it burned them, yet they laid it not to Heart.* No, alas, they did not lay it to Heart, so as to reform their evil Ways. They did not know how such a Fire came to be kindled amongst them; they did not see the Hand that set them on Fire. Why? but because they were blind. The Prophet *Jeremiah* makes the same Complaint, that they were strangely hardned, since they did not reform, when the Judgments of God were upon them, ready to swallow them up. *Fer. 5. 3. Lord, thou hast smitten them, but they have not grieved.* So Stupid and Senseless were they; thus were their Hearts *fatned*: *Thou hast consumed them, but they received not Correction.* They were not corrected and reformed by the wasting Judgments of God upon them: *They refused to return, and made their*

Hearts harder than a Rock. Truly, this is a sign, that the Hearts of Men are made harder than a Rock, when Judgments cannot amend them. So it was with *Pharaoh*, when he was under Judicial Hardness of Heart; when it was so with him, Ten Plagues could not open his Eyes, or soften his Heart: *The Lord had hardened his Heart*, and shut his Eyes by a Judicial Dispensation upon him, and now Ten Plagues one after another do him no Good; believe it, there is not a blacker Mark of Reprobation than this, when Men are not at all better'd by Afflictions; there cannot be a blacker Sign than that is. Thus it is noted of *Ahaz*, *2 Chron.* 28. 22. in the time of his Distress he did trespass yet more against the Lord. *This is that Ahaz*; see the Reprobate! Here he is; a Man, that though Distresses came upon him, he became more wicked than he was before. God himself speaks of such Men, as though he knew not what to do with them; He speaks of them, as though they were Hopeless and Helpless, in their Sin and Misery. *Isa.* 1. 5. *Why should you be smitten any more, you will revolt more and more? What should I take any Pains with you for, faith God? You are past Cure, and therefore*

fast Care; and thus *Ezekiel* 24. 13. It is
awful Scripture, *Because* (says the Lord)
have purged thee, and thou wast not pur-
ged, thou shalt not be purged any more, un-
til my Fury rest upon thee. God sought to
urge, that is, to reform them, by the Judg-
ments He brought upon them; but they
were not purged nor reformed. Therefore
the Lord gave them up, resolving to use no
more Means upon them in vain. The Fire
melts the Wax, but hardens the Clay; so
does the Fire of Affliction melt and soften
the Hearts of God's Elect, but it hardens
the Hearts of Reprobate Sinners.

3. *When Men are given up to a Spirit*
Error and Delusions in Matters of Reli-
gion, wherein the Eternal Salvation of their
souls is concerned, it is a Sign that the
Lord has smitten them with Spiritual Blind-
ness, and that He hath in a Judicial Way
deliver'd them into the Hands of Satan,
to deceive, and delude, and damn them.
Thus it was with the false Prophets; no
doubt but some of them did verily think
that their false Prophecies were true ones,
and that they were inspired by God, and
good Angels, when they were deceived
by the Devil and his Angels. *Micajah* said
to *Ahab*, the Lord hath put a Lying Spirit

into these thy Prophets, 1 Kings 22. 23. God permitted them to be imposed on by Satan in Judgment to *Abab*, and those who would not believe, when the Lord sent faithful Prophets among them; and yet these Prophets imagined that what they said was from Divine Inspiration. Hence in Verse 24. *Zedekiah* said, *Which way went the Spirit of the Lord from me to speak to thee?* Thou saist, it is a Lying Spirit; nay, but it is the Spirit of the Lord that hath told me, that *Abab* shall prosper in his Expedition at *Ramoth Gilead*. How then should the Spirit of the Lord tell thee, that he should fall there? There is a Passage in *Ezekiel*, which seems to refer to the Delusion of the false Prophets in *Abab*'s time, viz. that in *Ezek. 14. 9.* *If the Prophet be deceived, I the Lord have deceived that Prophet.* That seems to be an hard Word, and we might not have spoken it if the Lord had not spoken it first. How doth the Lord deceive Men, but by giving them up into the Hands of Satan! And thus it is with those that do obstinately adhere unto any Fundamental Error in Religion; which notwithstanding they may believe is Truth, yea, rare Truth. Was not so with some Christians in the Church

of *Thyatira*, by the Righteous Judgment of God upon them! *Rev. 2. 24.* *The depths of Satan, as they speak*; they did speak after this manner. These are deep Mysteries, rare Truths, extraordinary Discoveries, but, saith the Lord, *They are Depths of Satan.* No better, nor no other than Satanical Delusions; and it was once thus with the greatest part of the professedly Christian World, as an Effect of the Holy Wrath of God. The World was suddenly overwhelmed with *Arianism.* *The whole World* (as *Ferom* speaks) *sigh'd and wonder'd to see it self become an Arian.* Christians generally were then (as, alas, they are now) only Christians in Name, and not in Heart, which provoked the Lord to plague the World with *Arianism.* *The Dragon cast a Flood out of his Mouth,* *Rev. 12. 16.* The *Arian Heresie* was a Flood, which had like to have drowned the whole Christian World at once.

There are Millions of Souls among the Miserable Children of Men, that this is their Case; they are by a Judicial Act of God delivered unto Satan, to deceive them with false Perswasions, in Matters of Religion, so it is with the whole numerous Jewish Nation at this Day. They have in

their *Talmuds* the most monstrous Fables that can be thought of, and yet they verily believe them. The Righteous Lord hath given them up to Spiritual Delusion. And thus it is with *Mahometans*. One would think it were not possible for Men that have Rational Souls, to believe such absurd things as are in the Turkish *Alcoran*. It is strange to think that such an one as *Mahomet*, an Ignorant Wretch, that could not so much as write his own Name, should deceive such Multitudes as he did, but we shall cease to wonder at it, if we consider who is their King. Rev. 9. 11. speaks of those, that are of *Mahomet's Religion*; of them 'tis said, that, *Their King is the Angel of the Bottomless Pit, his Name is Abaddon and Apollyon*. That such an incredible Person as *Mahomet* was, should be able to Corrupt whole Nations, at once seems prodigious; nor could it have been if the Wrath of Heaven, had not delivered them into the Hand of him, whose Name is *Abaddon*, that is, the Devil, so named, because of his being a Destroyer of Souls. There are things as Fabulous and as Absurd in the Popish Religion, as in any other. Their Doctrine of *Transubstantiation* contrary to Common Sense and Reason, and

yet they believe it. Their *Legends* have as foolish Lies in them as can be told, and yet they believe them, as if they were Gospel. Now *Paul* tells us how this comes to pass, *2 Thes. 2. 11, 12.* *God shall send them strong Delusions, that they should believe a Lie.* When strong Delusions are sent upon Men, and that from God in a judicial way, to punish them for their not receiving the Truth, then they will believe a Lie; they will believe a Lying Legend is as true, as the Gospel it self. *Strong Delusion*, it is in the Original the *Efficacy of Errour*. When Men can believe Absurd Things, and Contradictions, and Impossibilities, and when they are Violent, and Obstinate, and Fierce, in maintaining these Things, here is now the *Efficacy of Errour*, that God sends upon them. What Monstrous, yea, what Hellish Opinions have some that call themselves Christians maintain'd, through the Tremendous Judgments of God blinding their Eyes. That ever it should be said to a Church as it was said to the Church of *Pergamus*, *Rev. 2. 15.* *Thou hast those which hold the Doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.* The most odious things that could be, they held. Their Doctrine was, That *Idolatry* and *Adultery* was no Sin.

That Men might commit those Sins, and yet be Saved, though they never Repented of them. That Liberty to Live in Sin, was a part of their Christian Liberty. Thus had God given them up in a judicial way, to such horrid Blindness as that was. There are Men in our Days, who call themselves Christians, who could not possibly believe such Things, and hold such Opinions as they do, were they not, in Judgment, blinded. What can we think otherwise of them that say, The Souls of Men are Mortal; that their Souls die, when their Bodies die. And that there is no Punishment for Sin, but in this World. It were impossible for Men, that have not only the Light of Nature, but the Word of God to enlighten them, to believe such Errors, if God had not in Judgment shut their Eyes, and smitten them with Penal Blindness. It is with many as it is said concerning the Idol Shepherd, *Zech. 11. 17. The Sword of the Lord is on his right Eye, and his right Eye shall be utterly darkned.* Were it not so, that the Sword of the Lord is on the right Eye of some Men, they could not believe as they do; but their right Eye, the Eye of their Soul and Understanding is utterly darkned; and if the Eye be darkned, how great is that Darkeness?

4. *When*

4. When Men are Apostates from the Holy Truths and Ways of God, there is cause to fear, that they are under a judicial Dispensation blinding and hardning their Hearts. Such an one was Reprobate Saul, 1 Sam. 15. 11. The Word of the Lord came to Samuel, saying, *Saul is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my Commandment.* When Men go back from following the Lord, it is a sign, that they are such as Saul was, such as the Lord hath and will reject. There are *Doctrinal Apostates*, Apostates as to the Matters of Faith: those Holy Truths, which once they did believe, now they disown, and are departed from them: The Scripture hath foretold that there will be such in the last Days; and that they will be Men under judicial Hardness of Heart. 1 Tim. 4. 1, 2. *In the latter Days, some shall depart from the Faith, having their Consciencés seared with an hot Iron.* A seared Conscience is the same with a desperately hardned Heart; and thus it is many times with Apostates. 'Tis certain, that those *Deserters*, who forsake the Blessed Ways of God, and never return to them again, are given up to Penal and Eternal Blindness. Such the Prophet speaks of, Jer. 8. 5. *This People of Jerusalem*

lem is *slidden back by a perpetual Backsliding*, they refuse to return. They that Backslide from the Ways of God with a perpetual Backsliding, are the Generation of God's Wrath, and the Eternally Hated of His Soul. It is a certain Truth, that none but Reprobates shall turn Everlasting Apostates. 2 Tim. 2. from Verse 16, to 21. The Apostle speaks concerning some, that had *erred concerning the Truth, saying, the Resurrection is past already*; nevertheless faith he, *the Foundation of God stands sure, the Lord knoweth who are His*. As in a great House there are Vessels of Honour and Dishonour, so it is in the House of God, the Visible Church. You may conclude that they that err and depart from the Truth and never see their Fundamental Errors, are Vessels of Dishonour. They do not belong to the Foundation of God, to His Election of Grace. There are also *Practical Apostates*, Men that have made a Beginning in the practical part of Religion, and after that fallen away. There was a time, when they would pray in their Families, and may be in their Closters, and frequent good Meetings, and associate themselves with them, that fear the Lord: But they have cast off the thing that is Good. Now they

do not pray, nor join themselves with those that fear and serve God. The Lord speaks, as if He would have no more to do with such vile Creatures, as those are, *Hos. 6. 4.* *What shall I do unto thee, O Ephraim? What shall I do unto thee, O Judah? For your Goodness is as a Morning Cloud, and as the early Dew it goes away.* They would seem to be good sometimes, and confess their Sins, pray to God, and promise Reformation, and the like: But their Goodness did soon go away; like the Morning Cloud it was gone, and like the early Dew, that lasteth but for a little while. When Men have been externally Reformed, but after that, return to their ungodly Courses again, that is a Black Mark upon them, a Dismal Sign indeed. The Apostle speaks of some *that escape the Pollutions of the World, through the Knowledge of Christ.* The Gospel hath had that power upon them to reform them; who nevertheless return again to their former Bondage unto Corruption, and with the Dog to his Vomit, and with Swine to wallowing in the Mire: It is to be feared that such woful Creatures are Dogs and Swine, and not Sheep, not the Elect of God. They are in a worse Condition than those perishing Creatures, that
never

never had the Gospel, nor a Sermon preached to them. Therefore the Apostle saith, *It had been better for them not to have known the way of Righteousness, than after they have known, to turn from the Holy Commandment,* 2 Pet. 2. 20, 21. There are sometimes visible Marks and Impressions of Divine Vengeance on the Souls of Great Apostates, the Marks of a Divine *Dereliction* are sadly to be seen upon them. And therefore it comes to pass, that the Common Grace, and those Spiritual Gifts, which once they had, are taken from them, *Mat. 25. 29. From him that has not, shall be taken away, even that which he has.* True Especial Saving Grace, the Man had not, only Common Grace and Heavenly Gifts, he has been made partaker of. It may be, he could pray excellent well, with good Affection; but he hath departed from God, and now God is departed from him, so that he cannot pray, the Blasting of God is upon his Soul, and those Gifts which he had are withered. It is with him, as it was with the Barren Fig-tree, after the Lord had Cursed it; *Peter said to Christ, Behold the Fig-tree, which thou Cursedst, is withered away,* Mat. 11. 21. It is a sad Sign, that **Men** are under a Secret Curse of the Lord, when

when they are withered, and that they are designed for the Fire. *If a Man abideth not in me (says Christ) he is cast forth as a Branch, and is withered, and cast into the Fire,* John 15. 6. When once Men become *withered* Professors of Religion, that their Common Grace is gone, and those Gifts of the Holy Spirit, which once they had, are taken away from them; this *Withering* is a Sign, that God intends them for the Fire. Again, when Men once turn *Apostates*, they are usually more wicked than they were before; they prove the worst of Men. A Sign that God has in Judgment given them up to Satan, and to their own Hearts Lusts, when they have been swept and garnished; but after that, Seven Devils come for one before, and their latter End is worse than their Beginning. *Apostates* do sometimes become *Atheists* and Prophanes Scoffers at all Religion. So did *Porphyry* and *Lucian* of old. Yea, sometimes Apostates turn from Profession to Persecution, so as to hate those Truths, which once they made a Profession of, and to persecute those Faithful Servants of God, that once they had an high Value for. You read in *Acts* 19. 33. of one *Alexander* an *Ephesian Jew*, who did hazard himself to save *Paul*; but it seems,

seems, this *Alexander* did prove afterwards an Apostate, and *Paul*, according to his Duty, Excommunicated him, 1 *Tim.* 1. 20. That dreadful Ordinance did but harden his Heart. After that the Apostle had in Faithfulness to God, that he might discharge the Ministerial Office, he was entrusted with, delivered *Alexander* to Satan, he became a Persecutor of the Blessed Apostle, 2 *Tim.* 4. 14. *Alexander the Copper-smith did me much Evil, the Lord reward him for his Work.* Judicious Interpreters conceive, that this *Alexander* was the same with him mentioned in the *Acts*, and the same that was delivered to Satan. 'Tis evident that the *Alexander* spoken of in all the Scriptures mentioned, was an *Ephesian*, him, does the Apostle, after a manner that was not usual with him, imprecate. *Paul* was not wont to pray against any Man, but belike he saw the Tokens of Reprobation on that Apostate, and therefore prays against him, instead of praying for him. Let it be further added here, that God, in Righteous Judgment, gives up some Apostates to commit the Unpardonable Sin, Heb. 10. 25. *Forsake not the assembling of your selves together, as the manner of some is:* Here begins Apostacy in forsaking the Assembly

Assembly of the Saints. Men, with Guilty and Galled Consciences, will forsake that Ministry, that has Light and Fire in it, because it does scorch and torment them, as 'tis said the Witnesses do them that dwell upon the Earth. But what does Apostacy bring Men to at last? How does it end? How awful are those words in *Heb. 10. 26.* *If we sin wilfully, after we have received the knowledge of the Truth, there remains no more Sacrifice for Sin.* As for wilful Apostates, which implies finning not only against the clearest *Light*, but with the highest degree of *Malice*, there remains no more Sacrifice for that Sin, Apostates then are in danger of becoming guilty of that Sin, which shall never be forgiven in this World, nor in the World to come. Guilty of that Sin, which there is no Sacrifice for: And whoever they be that are given up to that Sin, they are under an Everlasting Obduration of Heart. There is no hope, that they will ever be brought to Repentance. *Heb. 6. 6.* *If Men fall away after they have been once enlightened, and have tasted of the Heavenly Gift, and have been made Partakers of the Spirit of God, and have tasted the Word of God, and the Powers of the World to come, they have seen by the Gospel,*

spel, That Heaven is a Glorious Place, and Hell a Dreadful Place; if after all these Enlightenings they fall away, *it is impossible they should be renewed by Repentance.* Many have thought, that it was thus with the Emperor *Julian*. He had been a Professor of the Christian Religion, and a kind of Minister too, a *Reader* in one of the Churches; one that was designed for the Service of God in the Ministry. This Man turned Apostate, and a most Malignant Persecutor. He said of the Holy Scriptures, *Anegnon, Egnon, Kategnon.* I have read them, I know them, I hate them. Concerning that Man, the Christians in those Days concluded, that he had committed the Sin against the Holy Ghost, and therefore they refused to pray for him, although he was their Emperor. And verily, (though I am loth to speak it) I fear there have been many in our Days, guilty of *the Great Transgression.* In our Days, and in our Nation, Men have Apostatized from the Truth, and turned Persecutors of the People of God, and Scoffers at Religion. They were born of Godly Parents, and had a Religious Education. The Time was, when they would meet with those who were Pious Persons, to Pray and Mourn

Mourn together, but afterwards these Men (some of them Men of great Name and Fame in the World) became Scoffers at Prayer, and at the Special Operations of the Spirit of God in the Hearts of His Elect in their Conversion. One may fear, that such hardened Sinners have sinned unpardonably.

5. *When Men have sinned away the Spirit of God from them.* When they have had many Strivings of the Spirit, and sinned away those Strivings, and the Spirit of God is gone from them, never to strive with them more; then most certainly their Hearts are hardened, and their Minds blinded for ever. Thus it was with *Saul*, 1 Sam. 16. 14. *The Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul.* When the Spirit of God ceases striving with any Soul, woe to that Soul for ever. He is pleased to continue striving with some all their Days, all their Lives long; but it is not so with all. There are some that have so provoked and grieved His Spirit, who hath been striving with them, as that he goes away from them, and that for many Years before they die: He suffers them to live in the World to fill up the Measure of their Iniquity, but never strives with them again any more,
Gen.

Gen. 6.) 3. *My Spirit shall not always strive with Man, yet his Days shall be an hundred and twenty Years.* A Man may live an Hundred Years after God's Spirit hath ceased striving with him. The Holy Spirit departed from the *Jews* many Years before Death and Destruction overtook them. Oh! (saith Christ to *Jerusalem*, and He wept when he spake it) that thou hadst known in this thy Day, the Things of thy Peace, but *now they are hid from thine Eyes*, Luke 19. 41. They had the Gospel Preached to them Forty Years after that, but the Things of their Peace were then hid from their Eyes. When Men have Conviction of Sin in their Consciences, those Convictions are the Work of the Holy Spirit in them: When they are afraid of Hell, and of the Wrath to come; That is a Work of God's Spirit: When it is with them, as it was with *Felix*, who hearing *Paul* Preach about Righteousness, Temperance and Judgment to come, he fell trembling, such Awakenings of Conscience are from the Spirit of God, and therefore to sin them away is very dangerous. It provokes God to resolve that He will convince such stubborn, wilful, wicked Creatures no more, nor strive with them any longer.

longer. One Sin against clear Light, may provoke God to resolve, that his Spirit shall strive no more. Was it not so with *Saul*, 1 *Sam.* 15. 23. for one Act of Rebellion, he was rejected. But usually He waits long, and strives often with Sinners. Ten times did he strive with the Children of *Israel* in the Wilderness.

And when Sinners have good Affections stirring in their Hearts; when they think with themselves, they must forsake their Sins, and turn over a new Leaf: When a poor Creature thinks with himself, I must make sure of an Interest in Christ, or I am undone for ever; I will therefore go to God, and cry to Him, that He would give me Faith, and an Interest in Christ. When they are as it was with *Agrippa*, *almost persuaded* to be Christians. These Affections are the Operations of the Holy Spirit in their Hearts; and therefore, if they sin away all these good Affections, they sin away, and grieve away the Spirit of God from them, and then their Hearts will grow exceeding hard. The Iron, that hath been put into the Fire, if it grows cold again, it is harder than before: So as to the Iron Hearts of Men, when they have been put into the Fire, when the Fire of the Word
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of God, and the Fire of the Spirit of God, hath begun to melt and soften them, but they grow hard again, they are more hard-hearted than ever before. Believe it, Sirs, Men may grieve the Spirit of God till they have grieved Him away for ever; though He is not wont to go away all at once, yet at last He goes, and never comes again. And when it is so, poor sinful Creatures, we may say of their Souls, as my Text speaks of the Cities of *Judah*, *Their Souls are laid waste, and they shall become desolate for ever.*

For then God gives them up to hardness of Heart, and blindness of Mind; yea, He swears in his Wrath, that they shall never enter into His Rest; as in the 95 *Psalms*, they grieved the Spirit of God for a long time, *Forty years was He grieved. O harden not your Hearts as in the Day of Provocation!* As they did against whom He swore in His Wrath, saying, *If they enter into my Rest.* If they do so! What then? Says the Lord, Let not me be counted God any longer, if these Rebellious hard-hearted Creatures ever see Heaven.

6. *When Men do not believe there is any Evil in Great and Damning Sins, it is a sign that they are under penal Blindness*
and

and Hardness: There are many such in the World. *Idolatry* is a damning Sin. No Idolater shall inherit the Kingdom of God. And yet Idolaters are so hardened and be-fotted by their Idols, as they don't believe there is any Sin at all in their Superstitious Worship. So it was with *Israel* of old; they said, *they had not sinned*. Thou sayest, *I am innocent*, Jer. 2. 35. yet grievous Idolaters. What is more plain than the Second Commandment, *Thou shalt not make to thy self any graven Image*. Nevertheless, an hardened Papist, all the Arguments in the World shall not convince him, that he doth Evil to fall down before Idols, before Images of Gold and Silver. I remember a very Learned Papist maintaineth that *Aaron* did not sin when he made the Golden Calf, although *Moses* told him, That he had sinned a great Sin. For all that, an Idolater affirms, that he sinned not at all. Here is the effect of penal Blindness.

Oppression is a great Sin; and yet some Men are so hardened, that they say it is no Sin. *Ephraim loves to Oppress, and yet he saith, they shall find no Iniquity in me, that is Sin*. And *Persecution* is a grievous Sin; God hath ordained his Arrows against Persecutors. The Arrows of Divine Vengeance

geance are prepared for them. And yet many Persecutors believe they don't sin, because they are Judicially hardened, *Psal.* 14. 4. *They eat up my People as they eat Bread.* They make no more of devouring the People of God, than a Man would do to eat Bread; like *Joseph's* Brethren, who threw him into the Pit, and *were not grieved for the Affliction of Joseph*; they were not troubled, for what they had done. *The time will come* (says Christ to his Apostles) *that Men will think they do God service to kill you.* Such prodigious hardness of Heart, and blindness of Mind, seizes woful Creatures. *Unbelief* is a great Sin; and yet there is many an Unbeliever under the Gospel, that never bewailed his Guiltiness in respect of that Sin. Positive Unbelief is an Evidence that the Man that is guilty of it, is under the power of an obstinate Will, a desperately hardened Heart. *John* 5. 40. *You will not come unto me that ye might have Life.* How many are there, that never mourn'd for that Sin? How many in this Assembly, that never shed one Tear, for their Unbelief? And yet that is the greatest Sin, that ever any among us was guilty of: When God shall open thy Eyes, and break thy hard Heart, the Cry of

of thy Soul will be, *O my Unbelief! O my Unbelief!* which, alas, thine hard Heart, and blinded Mind, is not at all sensible of. Sins of *Omission* are great Sins, and damning Sins. *Mat. 3. 10. Every Tree that doth not bring forth good Fruit, is hewn down, and cast into the Fire.* Not only the Tree that brings forth evil Fruit, but that which doth not bring forth good Fruit. Not only the Man that doth that which is wicked, but he that neglects to do what is good, must be hewn down, and cast into the Fire that shall never be quenched. And yet how many be there, that are not sensible of their Sin and Guiltiness before the Lord, on Account of their not bringing forth good Fruit! Many a Man blesses himself because he is no Drunkard, Adulterer, Idolater; or, in any other respect, Vicious; and yet, it may be, the Man doth not Pray in Secret, nor so much as Pray in his Family. That Man, that has been so often reproved for this his Sin, and yet shall live without Prayer in Secret, or in his Family, hath an Heart that is desperately hardened.

7. *They that become impudent in sinning, have their Hearts hardened, Ezek. 3. 5.* They are impudent and hard-hearted. Impudent Sinners are hard-hearted Sinners.
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When Men make nothing to break the Laws of God and Men. When they will not only sin, but stand to it, when they have done, like *Dathan* and *Abiram*, that came and stood in the Door of their Tents, *Numb.* 16. 27. thereby declaring they would stand to what they had done. They had abused *Moses* and *Aaron*, and would not fall under their Sin, till God made the Earth to open, and the Pit to swallow them alive. Men that will commit great Sins without any blushing at it, they are *impudent and hard-hearted*. There are some Persons that blush not to do those things which Persons of common Modesty would be ashamed of. *Jer.* 6. 15. *Were they ashamed, when they committed Abomination? No, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush.* They are impudent Sinners, that will sin openly, it may be, in the sight of the Sun, in the Day-time, as the Apostle speaks, *2 Pet.* 2. 13. *They riot in the day-time*, saith he. Why, a modest Sinner would not do so. They that are Drunk, are Drunk in the Night, or in secret places. But when Men sin in the Day-time, that shows that they are impudent Sinners. So when Men will sin and be vile in the open Streets. The Prophet speaks of such, *Isa.*

3. 9. *They declare their Sin as Sodom, they hide it not, woe unto their Soul.* The Men of Sodom did sin in the open Street. They came in the open Street, to Lot's House, and declared what Wickedness they resolved to commit. Such Sinners there are in Boston, you shall hear them in the open Street Cursing and Swearing, they declare their Sin as Sodom, *woe unto their Souls!* There are others seen in the open Street, staggering and reeling, and horribly Drunk; they declare their Sin as Sodom, *woe unto their Souls!* Others, you shall hear them speaking abominable Words in the open Street, as they pass along. If they meet with any Persons that are for their turn, their filthy unclean Tongues are like an open Sepulchre. This is to be like Sodom: They declare their Sin as Sodom, *woe unto their Souls!* So, when Sinners will venture to sin in the Face of God, it may be, in the House of God, like them in Jerem. 7. 9, 10. *Will you come and stand before me in this house, and say, we are delivered to do Abominations?* There are some so audacious, as to sin, where there is a special Presence of God, and of his Holy Angels, that is, in Church Assemblies, Laughing, and Playing, in the Lord's House, and on the Lord's

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Day.

Day. What wicked, hard-hearted Creatures are some Children, who are not afraid to laugh and play in this dreadful Place, in this House of God, and Gate of Heaven. One may be astonished, that ever such hardness of Heart should be in young Children. Once more. they are impudent and hard-hearted, who sin with *Delight*, they that make a sport of sinning and damning their own Souls. One may fear, that God hath given them up to Judicial Hardness of Heart. There are such wretched Fools that make a mock of Sin. It is a sport to them to do wickedly. They don't only sin, but it is their chief delight. What an awful Scripture is that 2 *Thess.* 2. 12. *That they all might be damned, who had pleasure in unrighteousness?*

Most of all, they are hard-hearted Creatures, who take pleasure in making *Others* sin. That do not only delight in sin themselves, but in making others sin. Such the Apostle speaks of, *Rom.* 1. 32. Men that did not only themselves commit things worthy of Eternal Death, but had *pleasure in them that did so*. This is Diabolical Hardness of Heart. If the Devil has an hard Heart, such Devils incarnate have so too. There are vile Sinners, who, if they can
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make another Drunk, they rejoice in that Iniquity; especially if they can make one that is a Professor of Religion Drunk, then they are glad, and have something to make themselves sport with. The Scent of Hell is upon such doleful Creatures. If there be any pleasure in Hell, that is it; it is to make others guilty of Sin. Thus you see, in these seven Particulars, who they are, on whom are *sad Symptoms* of their being thus given up to Judicial Hardness of Heart, and Blindness of Mind. It grieves me to insist so long on such a dreadful Subject; but the Word of the Lord must be spoken.

We proceed now unto the Third Thing proposed to be enquir'd into; Namely,

Whence it is that some who live under the Gospel are given up to Everlasting Hardness and Blindness? Whence is this?

Answer 1. *There are some who enjoy the Gospel, that do not belong unto the Election of Grace.* There are Reprobates, not only among those which have not, but among those which have the Gospel vouchsafed to them. For the offer of the Gospel is Universal to one as well as another, without any Discrimination or Distinction, *Mark*

16. 15. Go (saith Christ unto his Apostles) *and Preach the Gospel to every Creature.* Ezekiel in his Vision of the Holy Waters, (by which the Gospel, fitly compared to Water, is intended) speaks of Marishy and Miry places, *Ezek. 47. 11.* In that Vision the *Elect* of God are compared unto *Fishes* and *Fruitful Trees*: *Reprobates* are compared to *Marishes* and *Miry places*. So then, there are such as have the Waters of the Sanctuary flowing among them. The River of the Water of Life runs before their Doors continually; who nevertheless are Marishes and Miry places. *Mat. 22. 14.* *Many are called, but few are chosen*; there are but few Chosen Ones, but few Elect Vessels, among those that have the External Call of the Gospel vouchsafed to them. Now if Men do not belong to the Election of Grace, they will remain in their Blindness and Hardness. We must know, that the Decree of God, Divine Reprobation, is not the cause of Mens Damnation, much less of their Sinning, only an Antecedent thereof. Herein is a difference betwixt Election and Reprobation. Election is the cause of Salvation, and of the means necessary and conducing thereunto. It is the cause why Men Repent. and Believe,
and

and Walk in the way that is called Holy, which things are necessary in order to the attaining Eternal Life: But Reprobation is not the cause of Mens continuing in their Sins, or the oftner doing that for which they shall be Damned. This notwithstanding, as for those whom God in His Sovereignty hath not seen meet to chuse, but passed them over, they will continue in their Natural Blindness and Hardness, nor will they become Penitent Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. *John 6. 3, 7. All that the Father hath given unto me, shall come unto me.* Christ mentions that as the Reason why the *Jews* did not come to him; why they did not believe; God had not given them to Christ, in the Eternal Covenant of Redemption. *John 10. 26. You believe not, because you are not of my Sheep.* They that are not Sheep, that are not of the Elect of God, will never be brought to believe.

2. *God doth Harden and Blind the Hearts of some that enjoy the Gospel, out of respect to his own Glory.* That is God's End, as in all His Dispensations, so in a special manner in all his Judicial Dispensations. That which is the best End, must needs be God's End, in all that comes to pass in the World. Now this is His own Glory. He

aims at that in all. *Lev. 10. 3. This is that which the Lord hath said, I, will be Sanctified by them, that draw nigh unto me, and before all the People I will be Glorified.* And this is that God hath said, that by all that live under the Gospel He will be Glorified. Yea, He will be Glorified, either in their Conversion, or else in their Eternal Obduration and Desolation. And therefore it is, that God doth accept of the Endeavours of His Servants, for the Conversion of Souls, even as to those that never shall be Converted. When a Minister doth sincerely endeavour to Convert Souls, God accepts of him, and will at the Last Day Reward his Endeavours for the Conversion of those, that perish under his Ministry, as well as of those that shall be Saved. *1 Cor. 2. 15. We are a sweet Savour unto God, in them that are Saved, and in them that Perish,* because God will have Glory by means of the one, as well as of the other. When Pharaoh's Heart was hardened under the Ministry of Moses and Aaron, God had respect unto His own Glory in that Dispensation, as the Apostle observes, *Rom. 9. 17. For this purpose (saith God to Pharaoh) have I raised thee up, that I might declare my Name throughout the Earth.* Pharaoh

must

must continue in his Obstinacy, that the *Name* of God might be heard of throughout the Earth; that the whole World might ring with Discoveries of the Greatness and Glory of God. By this, God makes known the Glory of His *Sovereignty*, as in the 18th Verse of that Chapter, *Whom He will He hath Mercy on, and whom He will He Hardeneth.* Here now is the *Sovereignty* of God manifested; that one Man should be hardened, and not another; and one should be softened, and the *Mercy* of God Convert and Save him, and not another. So, the *Power* of God, the *Wrath* of God, the *Long-Suffering* of God, are by this made known unto his Creatures, unto all the Rational World. All this the Apostle mentions in the 22d Ver. of that Chapter; *What if God, willing to shew His Wrath, and to make His Power known, indured with much Long-Suffering, the Vessels of Wrath fitted for Destruction?* From whence does this come to pass? Why? *That God may shew His Wrath*, that He may manifest His Displeasure at Sin. How that provokes Him, and offends Him; and that therefore He is an Holy and a Righteous God. And that He may *make His Power known*, in punishing, and in breaking to

pieces the most obdurate Sinners. The Eternal Power of God, is seen in making a Creature able to bear such Punishment as that which Sinners endure in the World to come. That He may also *shew His Long Suffering*; His infinite Patience is seen, in that He suffers Sinners, hardened Sinners, to be so long out of Hell, bearing with them from one Year to another.

3. *When Men under the Gospel continue in their Blindness and Hardness, God gives them that which is their own Choice.* They delight in those Chaines of Darkness which are upon them, *Isai. 66. 3, 4. They have chosen their own Ways, I will chuse their Delusions, saith the Lord*; They chose their Delusions, let them have their Choice, saith God. He holds the Light before them, but then they shut their Eyes, and will not see; therefore God saith, I will shut their Eyes with a vengeance. Thus 'tis said in the Text before us, *Shut their Eyes*; The Apostles making mention of these Words, *Acts 28. 27. saith, They have closed their Eyes.* One Scripture saith, *Shut their Eyes*; another Scripture saith, *They have closed their Eyes.* So it was, they shut their Eyes against the Light, therefore God in Judgment did shut them too. Sinners
love

love to continue in the Dark, *John 3. 19, 20. This is the Condemnation, that Light is come into the World, and Men love Darkness rather than Light, and they hate the Light, because their Deeds are evil.* Now when 'tis so, God may justly say, *Those Men shall never see the Light which they could not endure.* And as for the Darkness which they loved and delighted in, they shall remain in it, until they come to be in the Blackness of Darkness for ever. Sinners, when God Speaks to them, yea, when He Thunders upon them, they stop their Ears, making themselves deaf to the loud Calls of Heaven. *Zech. 7. 11. They refused to hearken, and pulled away the Shoulder, and stoped their Ears, that they should not Hear.* If Men stop their Ears against the Voice of God, when He is speaking to them, the Lord may well say, as He here speaks, *Make their Ears heavy, and stark deaf, since they stop their Ears, when the God of Heaven is speaking to them.* Let the Thunder of His Word deafen them. Sinful Creatures harden their own Hearts. *Exod. 8. 32. Pharaoh hardened his Heart this time also.* It is said indeed in other Places, that *the Lord hardened Pharaoh's Heart*; but five or six times it is said, That

hardned his own Heart. God would never have hardened *Pharaoh's* Heart in a Judicial way, if *Pharaoh* had not first hardened his own Heart. For it is certain, that God never hardens the Heart of any poor Creature, that sincerely desires a soft Heart; but when Sinners harden their own Hearts, if they are given up to Everlasting Hardness; and whatever comes on them for it, they have no reason to complain of any wrong done; for God gives them nothing but their own Choice. As when the Lord plagued the People with False Prophets, that did delude, and deceive, and ruin them, it was their own Choice, *Jer. 5. 31. The Prophets Prophecy falsely, and the People love to have it so.* In many Cases it is so, that God punishes Men after the most fearful manner, when He gives them what they themselves would have. As the Children of *Israel* lusted after Flesh, God gave them their Hearts desire, and Death and Wrath with it. It is said of *Ezekiel's* Marishes, *That they shall not be healed.* They had no mind to be healed. Well, (says the Lord) that has been their Sin, and that shall be their Punishment: Since they would not be healed, they never shall be healed. So then the Lord is Righteous in his Dispensations.

4. *Some,*

4. *Some, who live under the Gospel, do exceedingly provoke the Lord to inflict Spiritual Judgments upon them.* Heb. 3. 8. *Harden not your Hearts, as in the Provocation;* they did by hardening their Hearts, provoke the Lord to give them up to yet more Hardness. The Lord never in a Judicial Way hardens the Hearts of any Man, until such times as he hath, by some Sin or other, provoked him to inflict Spiritual Judgments as a Punishment thereof. And there are especially three Evils which provoke God to deal thus with Sinners. The first is, *That Sin of Unprofitableness under the Means of Grace.* When God takes much Pains with Sinful Creatures, to do their Souls Good, and all is Labour lost upon them, He is exceedingly provoked. You know, Men, if they have taken much Pains about any thing, and all to no purpose, they are greatly displeased. If it be in manuring their Ground, or endeavouring to make their Trees or Vines become fruitful, they are angry, and resolve they will bestow no more Pains, when all is to little or no purpose. Thus it is, when Men live under the Gospel, and the Soul melting Ordinances of it, but are not better'd thereby; the Righteous Judgment of
God.

God giveth them up to Everlasting Hardness and Barrenness of Soul: *He giveth them to Salt*, as *Ezekiel's* Expression is, *Ezek. 47. 11.* This is a Provocation, which causeth the Lord to lay Men's Souls utterly waste, and eternally desolate. This we see in the Instance of the Fig-tree, *Matth. 21. 19.* the Lord Jesus came unto the Fig-tree, expecting to have found Fruit thereon, and He sees no Fruit, *He found nothing but Leaves only*, and now He was provoked to curse the Fig-tree, and say of it, *Let no Fruit grow on thee, from this Day forward, and for ever.* After the like manner does the Lord deal with the Souls of Men, when He favours them with precious Means of Grace. They have the Gospel and Ordinances of it, purely and powerfully dispensed from Day to Day; and the Lord continues Striving with them by his Spirit, as He did with the Sinners of the Old World, in the Ministry of *Noah*, that Preacher of Righteousness; but all in vain: Now, saith the Lord, as for those Souls, never let Fruit be found upon them as long as they live. This shall be the Punishment of their unfruitfulness! It is a very awful Scripture we have in *Heb. 6. 7. 8.* *The Earth which drinketh in the Rain, that comes*

comes oft upon it, and bringeth forth Herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth Blessing from God: But that which beareth Thorns and Briars is rejected, and is nigh unto Cursing. Thus it is, when Men have the Rain of the Word of God coming oft upon their Souls; they hear Sermon after Sermon, from one Opportunity to another, and yet bring forth nothing, but Briars and Thorns; that shows they are stony Ground, that they have stony Hearts within them: And it is to be feared, that they are nigh unto Cursing. And what is that Cursing they are nigh unto, and in extreme danger of, but this very thing I am speaking of? They are nigh to this Curse, that the Prophet *Isaiah* doth here pronounce upon the *Jews*. They have cause to tremble, lest the Lord quickly say concerning them, Their Minds shall be blinded, and Hearts hardened, and they shall never be delivered from Spiritual Plagues, until their Souls are desolate. Are they not nigh to these Curses of God upon them? [And as a Sign hereof, God sometimes takes away the Means of Grace from such a People; that either they shall have no Gospel Preached to them, or if they have, not with that Power and Glory, that

that once it was. Because, when they had a Precious Ministry, and Eminency of Mercy from God, in that respect, they did not Prize and Profit under it, according to the Lord's Expectations; they shall never enjoy the like again. This we may learn from the Parable of the Vineyard in the fifth Chapter of *Isa.* *What could have been done more to my Vineyard,* did the Lord say? In respect of outward Means, more could not have been done; and yet when the Lord looked for Grapes, *it brought forth wild Grapes.* Well, saith God, *I will tell you what I will do;* this Vineyard shall not be pruned nor digged: They shall have no more such Sermons, in order to their Conversion, as they have had; and *I will command the Clouds, that they rain no rain upon it.* They had Ministers, who were like Clouds full of Rain; but they shall have such Teachers and Preachers, as are like Clouds without Rain; no Heavenly Water at all in them. We see, how this Prophetical Prediction was verified on the Jews, *Acts 13. 46.* *It was necessary, that the Word of God should be spoken to you; but seeing you put it from you, Lo, we turn to the Gentiles.* You (says Paul) have had the Gospel a long time,

time, but have been obdurate and unprofitable under it; therefore it is now going from you. Christ told the *Jews*, that their unfruitfulness under Means of Grace, would provoke God to take those Means from them. *Mat. 21. 43. Therefore I say unto you, the Kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a Nation bringing forth the Fruits thereof.*

Secondly, *When Men sin against clear Light, they provoke the Lord thus to deal with them.* There is an *External Light*; when the Will of God is clearly revealed, either by His written Word, or by His Word Preached, and yet Men will go against all that Light; they provoke God to reject them. Thus it was with *Saul*, *1 Sam. 15. 23. Saith Samuel to him, Because thou hast rejected the Word of the Lord, He hath rejected thee.* The Gospel is the most Glorious Light, that ever did shine in the dark Souls of Men: When this Light is refused and rejected, it provokes God to leave such Sinners in Eternal Darkness. You may see in the 28th Chap. of the *Acts*, that *Paul* being at *Rome*, Preached the Gospel unto the *Jews* there; but they rejected it: Upon which he put them in mind of what the Prophet *Isaiah* had

had Predicted. I must tell you (said he) what *Isaiah* has spoken. He recites to them the Words of the Text I am now upon, and gives them to understand, since they had despised and shut their Eyes against the Light, that had been offer'd to them, the Lord would shut their Eyes, and harden their Hearts, in a way of Judgment, *Acts* 28. 25, 26. There is also an *Internal Light*, or the Light of Nature, as well as a Light, which is of Divine Supernatural Revelation. Natural Conscience informs Men, as to many things, what they ought to do, and what they ought to abstain from. So that if they had no written Word of God, yet they would know, that such and such things are Good, and ought to be done; and that such and such things are Evil, and may not be done. The Apostle in *Rom.* 2. 14, 15. shews, that the Gentiles who had not the written Law, as the *Jews* had, yet *did by Nature, the things contained in that Law; their Thoughts, their Consciences, excusing them, or accusing them, on the Account of what they did; thereby shewing the Work of the Law written in their Hearts.* There are many things that Men, that have not the Scriptures, know, and cannot but know to be great Sins. *Abi-*

melech

melech knew, that, if he had committed Adultery, he should have brought a great Sin upon himself, and upon his People, *Gen. 20. 9.* yet he never read one Word of the Scripture in his Life. So Men cannot but know, for them to Steal and Lie, and be Disobedient to their Parents, are evil things. Natural Conscience accuseth them for such Sins. It says to an ungodly Child, Thou dost not do well to disobey thy Father, or to despise thy Mother.

When a wicked Man Steals, Conscience flies in his Face. He that tells a Lie, hath a Light within him, that condemns him. He knows, that according to the Judgment of God, he is worthy of Eternal Death, for that Sin, *Rom. 1. 32.* Now, when they sin against this Light, they provoke God to smite them with Blindness, and Hardness of Heart. And when they have sinned horribly against the Light of Nature, God, in dreadful Judgment, gives them up unto a Reprobate Mind. It is said of the Gentiles, and especially it was true of the Debauch'd Courtiers in the Palace of *Nero*, at *Rome*, *God gave them over unto a Reprobate Mind, and to do those things which are not convenient,* *Rom. 1. 28.* They were come to that hideous pass in Wickedness, that they could

could do the most Abominable Things, and not be troubled in their Minds about it: Had no trouble of Conscience for what they did. Thus were they given over to a Reprobate Mind. God, in his sorest Wrath had smitten them with Judicial Hardness, and Penal Blindness of Heart, because they had grievously sinned against the clear Light of Nature, and of their own Consciences.

Thirdly, *Men by accustoming themselves to Sin, and to do Evil, provoke God to smite them with Spiritual Plague.* For a Man once to do a thing, that is against his Conscience, or that he knows to be Evil, is very dangerous; but if he shall do this thing often over, until he has habituated himself in it; that provokes God to give such Sinners up unto that Hardness which is Judicial and Perpetual. There is a threefold Hardness of Heart; Natural, Habitual, and Judicial.

I. There is a *Natural* Hardness of Heart, for all the Children of Men do come into the World with this Disease about them. They are Born with blind Minds, and hard Hearts. All *Adam's* Children are so. This is an Hereditary Disease. That woful Disease of *the Stone*

in the Heart is what every Child of *Adam*, is sick of, as soon as ever he comes into the World. And that Disease is not perfectly cur'd in God's Children, as long as they are on the Earth; therefore Christ upbraided his Disciples with *their hardness of Heart*. Sometimes the Works and Word of God has not made that Impression on true Believers as might be expected. There is in them a dulness of Understanding. They are not so quick and apprehensive in Spiritual things as they ought to be; and are on that account charged with Hardness of Heart; *Mark* 6. 52. and 8. 17. and 16. 14.

2. There is an *Habitual* Hardness of Heart, *viz.* That which is acquired by the frequent Commission of some Sin or other; when Men, by accustoming themselves to do Evil, get an Habit of it. Frequent Acts become an Habit at last, and Custom in Sin takes away Conscience of Sin. Their undone Hearts are thereby hardened, *Eph.* 4. 19. *Who being past feeling, have given themselves over unto Laciviousness, to work all Uncleaness with greediness.* How came they to be *past feeling*, but by accustoming themselves to such Wickedness? If a Man that never was guilty of such Wickedness,

Wickedness, do a vile thing, suppose an Act of Laciviousness, or any thing that is Abominable. Now that Act will trouble his Conscience, yea, exceedingly disquiet it. But if he does that Wickedness again and again, then by degrees he comes to be past feeling. So it is with those that are *Habitual Liars*; they are so used to Lie, that they can Lie, and make no Conscience of it. So it is with those that are *Habitual Drunkards*, most woful and undone Creatures are they, who have used to make themselves *Drunk*; that they can commit that Sin, and not be troubled for it. So is it with those that have got an Habit of profane Swearing; it may be they will Swear, and not be sensible that they have done so. If they are reprov'd for it, they will say they did not Swear. They are so habituated in Profaneness, as to have no Sense of their Evil. The Wrath of God upon them, hath suffered them, by being accustomed unto Sin, to harden their Hearts until they are past feeling: And hence,

3. There is a *Judicial Hardness* follows thereupon; these two go usually together. God in Wrath leaves Men to commit the same Sin an hundred times over, and when they have so done, He is further pro-

voked

voked with them, until Judicial Hardness and Blindness seize them for ever. And then God saith of such an one, as in Rev. 22. 11. *He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; He which is filthy, let him be filthy still.* He hath taken up a Course of sinning, and is resolved to go on in it, so let him. He is a grievous Liar, shameful Drunkard, a Thief, a Lacivious, Unclean Wretch; let him go on to be so still. *Lord, how long!* Even until he has sinned his Soul into Hell; there to be utterly desolate. What doth the Lord say of Ephraim? *Hos. 4. 17. Ephraim is joined to Idols, let him alone.* So doth the Lord say: There is such an one, his Name is so; a Lust of Drinking to Excess, is his Idol; *Let him alone.* And there is another, his Name is such an one, he is joined to the World, that is his Idol; *Let him alone.* And there are others, that a proud Fashion is their Idol; *Let them alone.* Thus do Men, by their Obstinacy in sinning, provoke the Lord, in a Judicial Way, to give them up to that Obstinacy of Heart, which is incurable; and, what then will become of them? Let a Prophet say what *Jerem. 13. 23. Can the Ethiopian change his Skin, or the Leopard his Spots? Then may you also do good,*

good, who are accustomed to do evil. Thus we have seen the Truth confirmed, in the things, that have been insisted on; we proceed to the Application of the Doctrine. Let the

I. Use, be for *Information* in several Particulars.

1. We see here, *That the Conversion of a Sinner does not depend so much on the outward Means of Grace, as on the good Pleasure, and Will of God.* The Effect does not depend on the Instrument so much, as on that which is the Principal Efficient. God is able, if He be so pleased, to Convert Men without the Gospel; but the Gospel without the Power of God, will never Convert a Soul. *Jam. 1. 18. Of His own Will begat He us with the Word of Truth;* but the Word of Truth can never Convert a Sinner, except the Will of God, that works all things in all, go along with it, to make it effectual. It is true, that Sinners are not ordinarily Converted, without the Gospel. God has appointed the End and Means to go together; *How shall they believe in Him, of whom they have not heard? And how shall they Hear without a Preacher?* The Apostle hath therefore said, *If our Gospel be hid, it is hid*

to them, that are lost, 2 Cor. 4. 3. If Men have no Gospel Preached to them, their Souls are like to be lost for ever. This, notwithstanding the Gospel, may be hid from Men, as to the Inward Saving Power and Efficacy of it, although they have the External Dispensation thereof continued to them. That is clear from the Text and Doctrine we have before us. We may live under the Gospel, and the Ordinances of it, and yet not understand with our Hearts, and Convert, and be Healed. Men may live under the most Excellent Preachers in the World, and yet never be Converted by their Ministry. What an Excellent Preacher was the Prophet *Isaiah*? God upheld him in the Work of the Ministry a long time, above Sixty Years, to be a Prophet and Preacher to that People, and yet but few Converted by any of his Sermons! What an Excellent Preacher was the Prophet *Jeremiah*? And yet he did with many Tears, in Secret, bewail the unsuccessfulness of his Ministry. *Jerem. 13. 17. If you will not Hear, my Soul shall weep in secret places for your Pride; for all that they did not Hear, nor would they.* *John Baptist* was a most Powerful and Awakening Preacher, and an Happy Instrument of Converting

verting many Souls; yet there were some, and many too of them, who lived under his Ministry, that were never Converted by it, *Luke 7. 30.* It is said of the *Pharisees*, That *they rejected the Counsel of God against themselves.* Although *John* gave them Counsel from God, and the rejecting was against themselves, by so doing, they would do the greatest Harm to themselves, yet they rejected it. And as for the Apostles, How were they qualified to Preach the Gospel? Extraordinary Men of God; and yet the most of those, whom they Preached unto, persisted in their Unbelief. *Rom. 10. 16.* *All Men have not obeyed the Gospel,* saith *Paul*; not all whom the Apostles Preached unto. Nay, saith he, *Who hath believed our Report?* There were but few, comparatively to them that did not. The Lord Jesus Christ was the most Excellent Preacher, that ever was in the World, as they said of Him, *Never Man spake like that Man*; and yet but few Converted by his Ministry, *Isaiab 49. 4.* It is Christ that there speaks, saying, *I have laboured in vain, and spent my Strength for nought, and in vain; Israel is not gathered.* Many a Sermon did Christ Preach, and but few Souls, that were brought

brought home to God thereby. This proveth undeniably, that Conversion depends not so much on the outward Means, as upon the All-working, All-powerful Will of God. Therefore the same Word dispenced at the same time, shall Convert one and not another. That Sermon that one is Converted by, another is no more moved by, than the Seat he sits upon. Thus when *Paul*. Preached among the Scholars, in the University of *Athens*, there were some that did Believe, and others, that did nothing but Mock and Ridicule what was spoken to them. The same Sermon that melts the Heart of one, hardens another. *2 Cor. 2. 16. We are a savour of Life unto some, but of Death unto others.* Perfumes that yield a sweet savour unto some, whereby they are revived; unto others that are under Indispositions, as to their Health, they are hurtful, they make them sick, because of Diseases about them. So the Word of the Gospel is to some a Means to Convert and Save them, and to make them grow in Grace; and is, in that respect, a savour of Life unto Life unto them: Others, it does occasion their being more Hardened, and so does augment their Guiltiness and Condemnation at the last:

So it becomes to their Souls a favour of Death unto Death.

Inform. 2. *We may here see the Reason why many are not Convinced, Converted, Reformed, notwithstanding all means used with them.* None of all the Dealings and Dispensations of God towards them, can prevail hereunto; alas, they are under a Judicial Dispensation of the Lord upon 'em! That is the very Reason of it, *Isai. 44. 18. They have not known nor understood, for he hath shut their Eyes, that they cannot see; and their Ears, that they cannot understand.* If it be so, that God, in Judgment, hath shut Mens Eyes, all the Men and Means in the World can never open them, until that Judgment be removed from them. When God hath in a Judicial Way given Men up unto a Spirit of Error and Delusion in Matters of Religion, wherein their Souls are concerned, there is no opening of their Eyes, and convincing them of their Error, while 'tis so with them. How plain and clear is it from the Scriptures of the Old Testament, that the *Messiah* is come, and that *Jesus of Nazareth* is the true *Messias*? And yet there are Millions of *Jews* in the World at this Day, that will not be convinced of it, because

cause *Isaiah's* Prophecy is fulfilled upon them. And therefore, the Apostle gives this Reason of it, *Rom. 11. 8. God hath given them a Spirit of Slumber; Eyes, that should not see, and Ears, that they should not hear unto the Day.* How clear is it from the Scriptures, that God only is to be Worshipped? *Mat. 4. 10. Him only shalt thou serve.* How clear is it from the Scriptures, that Men may not Worship or Pray unto Angels, Saints, Graven Images? That one would think, that they that have the Scriptures, and own them to be the Word of God, should be convinced, that this ought not to be; yet come to a Papist, all the Scriptures you can produce to him, will not convince him of his Error. Alas, *God* hath shut their Eyes, and given them up to a Blind Mind! And when it is thus with Miracles cannot Convert them; if God should work Miracles for them, they would not be Converted thereby; should God send Men from the Dead to them, neither would that Convert them. Should God break open the Barrs of the Bottomless Pit, and let loose Devils and Damned Wights, to come flying and crying into our Assemblies, with the Chains of Darkness rattling about them, to warn Sinners of the Wrath

to come, and to tell them, what a Dreadful Place Hell is, neither would that Convert them. Neither will they be persuaded, though one come from the Dead; yea, out of Hell it self, have not your Eyes seen Miserable Creatures Possessed and Tortured by Devils? For all that, some of those very Persons are in their Sins, and Unconverted to this Day. Consider the Children of *Israel*, What Miracles did God do for them in *Egypt*, and in the *Wilderness*? Miraculous Judgments, and no less Miraculous Deliverances; and they lived by Miracles every Day, and they saw the Miracle of the Cloud before their Eyes every Day and Night. One would have thought these should have been a most Holy People, and that these Miracles would have Converted them all, but it was far otherwise, and *Moses* tells the Reason, *Deut. 29. 3, 4. The Lord hath not given you an Heart to perceive, and Eyes to see, and Ears to hear to this very Day.* They were under Judicial Blindness and Hardness, great Multitudes of 'em, and therefore continued in their Sins, after the Signs and those great Miracles, which their Eyes had seen. And so the *Jews* in *Christ's* Time; What Miracles did they see for their

their Conviction and Conversion? And yet it is said in *John* 12. 37. That, *although He did many Miracles before them, they believed not in Him.* And why so? Whence is this, that when many Miracles were done before them, they did not believe on him? The Evangelist mentions the Reason, in Verse 39, 40. *They could not believe, because Isaias had said, He hath blinded their Eyes, and hardned their Hearts.* There was as great a Miracle wrought for the Conversion of *Jereboam*, as for the Conversion of *Paul*; for *Paul* was by a Miracle made Blind, and by another Miracle cur'd of his Blindness. So *Jereboam*; by a Miracle had his Hand withered up, and by a Miracle had it made whole again; yet *Jereboam* was not Converted, because he was under Judicial Blindness and Hardness. Moreover, one would think, that the awful Judgments of God, should awaken Men unto Repentance; but they won't be reformed, if under Judicial Dispensations hardning their Hearts. We see that the most Solemn Judgments Reform not many, but they continue in their Sins as heretofore: Why, it is with them as with *Saul* and his Men, *1 Sam.* 26. 12. *A Deep Sleep from the Lord was fallen upon them.* A strange Thing, that

when they were in such danger, they should be in so profound a Sleep; when those whose Lives they sought, came and took *Saul's* Spear, they could easily have kill'd him and his Men, they were so found asleep, as not to discern it. *Why, a Deep Sleep from the Lord was upon them.* Thus, when Men are visited with Judgments of God, which kill their Neighbours in their sight, and they are in danger themselves to be killed by those Judgments every Day, and yet they are not awakned; it is, because *A Deep Sleep from the Lord is upon them.* Alas, if Men are under a Judicial Dispensation, their Hearts are harder than a Rock: In *Numb. 20. 8.* *Moses* was to speak to the Rock; he spake to the Rock, to let the People see that their Hearts were harder than the Rock; for *Moses* did but speak to the Rock, and it fell a bleeding, and gushed forth Water; whenas he spake to them, and their Hearts did gush out no Water: He spake to them in the Name of God, and their Hearts did not bleed. Thus it is when Sinners are under a Judicial Dispensation Heaven, it is easier to make the Rocks to bleed, than to Convert such sinful Creatures, as they are.

Inform

Inform. 3. We may here see, that *Spiritual Judgments*, such as that of an *Hard Heart*, and a *Blind Mind*, are of all the most *Fearful and Astonishing*. The Prophet *Isaiah* speaks here, as a Man astonished, when he understood from the Lord, that *Spiritual Judgments* must be inflicted on that People. No Judgments like these which light on the Souls of Men, because an Immortal Soul is of more worth than the whole World! God never spake a more dreadful Word to *Pharaoh* than that, *Exod. 9. 14. I will send all my Plagues upon thine Heart!* Ay, that is dismal indeed, when God shall smite Men with Heart Plagues! When the Lord sends Plagues upon their very Souls within 'em; when He Plagues them with a *Blind Mind* and *Hard Heart*, that's fearful. What a dreadful Imprecation was that? *Lam. 3. 65. Give them Sorrow of Heart.* So the Words are in the Translation; but, in the Original, they run thus, *Give them Obstinacy of Heart, thy Curse unto them!* Ay, that is a Curse with a Vengeance, when God gives Men *Obstinacy of Heart*. Smites them with the Plague of an *Hard Heart*. There is no surer Sign of Ruin, nor any thing that makes way thereto like this. *Who*

ever hardened his Heart against God, and prospered? Never any Man; there never has been one Instance of it, in all the World, since the World began; never any Creature hardened himself against God, and prospered at the long run; the meaning is, such will be most certainly ruined. Many times Hardness of Heart is sent upon Men, as a Forerunner of their Temporal Ruin, as we see in Pharaoh, and in Sihon, *The Lord hardened his Spirit, and made his Heart obstinate*, because He intended the Ruin of that Enemy of his People, *Deut. 2 30.* And of others it is said, *Josh. 11. 20. It was of the Lord to harden their Hearts, that He might destroy them utterly.* So then it is the way to utter Destruction, for Men to be given up by the Lord unto an Hard Heart: Yea, it is a dismal Sign of Everlasting Ruin coming upon those poor miserable Creatures, that are thus smitten of God. *Rom. 2. 4. Thou, by thy Hard and Impenitent Heart, dost treasure up Wrath against the Day of Wrath.* Would you know a Sign of a Vessel of Wrath? Here is one, and a dreadful one; when God gives a poor Creature up to an Hard and Impenitent Heart, it is a dismal Sign of his being appointed to Wrath. No Sin, that ever he was guilty

ty of, would have proved the Damnation of his Soul, had it not been for his Hard Heart, but that proves his Ruin after all. What is like to come on those, that go on to harden their Hearts against all Means of Conviction? Oh, hear the Word of the Lord this Day, and tremble at it! *Prov 29. 1. He that being often reprov'd, hardneth his Neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without Remedy.* Oh, that Young People would think of this Word, who have been *often reprov'd*! God hath met with them, and in the way of His Providence been reprov'ing them, and the Word of God hath met with them, and reprov'd them, full many a time. It may be their Parents, their Fathers, their Mothers have reprov'd them. The Young Man has been told of the Sin he lives in. He delights in vain Companions, and has often been reprov'd for it. He has been guilty of the Sin of Drunkenness, and often reprov'd for it. He has mis-spent his Precious Time. How many Hours in sinful Gaming, for which he has been often reprov'd? But he hardens his Heart against all: The Reproofs of God are not regarded by him, he goes on in his Trespases; if I could, I would shed Tears of Blood

over that poor Creature: Will not the God of Heaven destroy him suddenly, and without Remedy! As for such Sinners, the very Tokens of the second Death are upon them. There comes to my Mind what the Prophet said to *Amaziah*, 2 Chron. 25. 16. *I know the Lord hath determined to destroy thee, because thou hast not hearkened to my Counsel.* If thou wilt not hearken to the Word of the Lord, I cannot say, that I know God hath determined to destroy thee, but I am sure thou hast cause to fear it. To be given up to Hardness of Heart, is the most terrible thing that can be. Of all the Plagues of *Pharaoh*, this was the most dreadful; yea, this is the Misery of Hell, and of the Damned that are there, Rev. 16. 9.

II. Use, for Exhortation. *Oh, for the Lord's sake, and for your own Souls sake, beware that there be not any among you, that shall be given up in Judgment to an Hard Heart, and Blind Mind!* It was said unto the Jews, Acts 13. 40. *Beware lest that come upon you that is spoken in the Prophets.* So, my Friends, beware lest this come upon that is spoken by the Prophet *Isaiah*, lest that living under the Gospel, you should be given up to Blind Minds and

and Hard Hearts. Consider but Two Things.

Consider, 1. *We have had, and have the Gospel among us.* The People in *New-England* have had the Gospel, and that from their Beginning to be a People, and that with great Power and Glory. God hath sent His Servants rising early and sending them: If ever the Gospel shin'd since the Apostles Days, it has done so here; though now the Light of it, in some Places, begins to grow dim. What Eminent Ministers of God hath this Land been favoured with? If there be a spot in this Earth, the Gospel hath shin'd upon, *New-England* hath been the Place. And most certain it is, the Sermons which have been Preached, will have a very great Effect upon the Generation coming on. The Word of the Lord will prosper to the End, God hath determined. It will either be an Enlightning or a Blinding, a Softning or an Hardning VWord. It will be a favour of Life unto Life, or of Death unto Death, one of the two. But Oh, tremble lest it be a favour of Death unto Death! Is there any of you, that are willing to go to Hell, laden with Sermons to think on, when you are there, though you regard them not now? Consider,

Consider, 2. *There is cause to fear, that many of this Generation are under a Judicious Dispensation.* May it not be said to New-England, as Christ said, when he wept over Jerusalem, Luke 19. 42. *Oh, that thou hadst known in this thy Day the things that belong to thy Peace; but now they are hid from thine Eyes!* Oh, that we might not say and sigh over New-England, *The things of thy Peace are hid from thine Eyes!* The things that concern our outward Peace, are hid from our Eyes! I pray God, that it may not appear, that there is a Judicial Dispensation in that: But how is it with Men in Spiritual Respects, and as to Soul Concernments? What is there of any General Reformation, since awful Judgments have been breaking in among us? The Lord hath come upon this Land with Sword, Fire and Sicknes; and behold the Anger of the Lord is not turned away, but His Hand is stretched out still. In as much as Temporal Judgments continue, we may fear that Spiritual Judgments are not removed. Surely Men are dreadfully Hardned and Blinded in their Sins, when there is not so much as an External Reformation, by all the Judgments of God. It seems as if God had

said

said concerning Multitudes in this Land, *He that is unjust, let him be unjust still, and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still.* Those common prevailing Iniquities, that have been testified against by God, and by his Servants, are they not as formerly? Drunkenness is common. He that was a Drunkard before these late Epidemical Judgments, is so still. The like is to be said, as to other Evils. He that was Covetous before, is so still, and he that was Proud before, is so still. There is not a general Reformation, in respect of so much as any one Evil found amongst us. And how is it with the rising Generation? Are not Multitudes of them a poor, unconverted, perishing Generation? They have sinned against the Light of their Education. Some of them have conformed to those Superstitions, which their Fathers and Grandfathers came into this Wilderness, in hope that their Posterity would never have defiled themselves with Corruptions, which they whom they are descended from, would sooner have Died, than have complied with. Are they not degenerate Plants? As for many of our Young People, all that can be said of them, is, that they are Civil, not so Debauch'd as some are; but as for Regeneration,

neration, and an Holy Life, there is nothing of that, can be seen in them. And as to many, they are Profane Persons like *Esau*. They are Swearers, Drunkards, Unclean Persons; nay, some of them are turned bloody Pirates, though Born in *New-England*. Such awful Symptoms are there of a Judicial Dispensation upon this People. And if so, (which Mercy forbid) we may expect a Continuance of Temporal Judgments. And which is Ten Thousand times worse, more Spiritual Plagues. What will God do with such a People? I have a long time feared, that *Amos's* Famine will, at last, be the Judgment of God on *New-England*; *Not a Famine of Bread, but a Famine of Hearing the Word of the Lord.*

But is there any that saith, *What shall we do to be deliver'd from Spiritual Judgments?* You say we can't open our own Eyes, nor break our own Hearts. It is true; but,

1. *Don't shut your own Eyes, when God holds the Light before you.* Don't harden your own Hearts, that you may not provoke God to harden them. Beware of doing those things, that will cause God to harden them. Sin will do it, and delaying to hear

Hardness of Heart, &c. III

hear the Calls of the Gospel will do it. Hence the Scripture saith, *To day, hear his Voice, lest any of you be hardened through the Deceitfulness of Sin*, Heb. 3. 13. Here is the Deceitfulness of Sin; Men think they will, *hereafter*, repent of their Sins, and make sure of an Interest in Christ; you will harden your Hearts, if you delay turning to God, tho' but for a Day. And beware of thy sinful Companions; how many hopeful young Men have been undone to their Eternal Ruin, by hearkning to their ungodly Companions? Young People, sometimes, when they get together, especially on the Night after the Sabbath, harden one another in Sin, and against the Ways of the Blessed God: Oh! beware of that!

2. *Meditate on those things that have a Tendency to break thy Heart.* Meditate on the Evil of Sin, and thy own Sinfulness. Meditate on the Infinite Wrath and Justice of God. Think, how he will punish Sin. Meditate on Eternity; go alone, and think of Eternity. I have somewhere read of one, that casting an Eye on a Book, saw that Word *Eternity* in it, and immediately upon it wept, saying, *That Word hath broke my Heart.* And meditate on the Mercy

Mercy of God. Nothing else will break the Heart kindly. Thoughts of the Wrath of God, without Consideration of His Mercy, won't do it.

3. *Go to the Lord Jesus Christ.* If ever thy blind Eyes are opened, Christ must open them. He came, that they, that are blind, might be made to see. He counsels every Soul that hears the Gospel, to come to Him, that so they may have that Eye-Salve, with which, if their Eyes be anointed, they shall see, *Rev. 3. 19.* If ever thy Heart be broken, Christ will be the Breaker of it; and a Look from Christ will break thy Heart. When the Lord Jesus Christ looked upon *Peter*, he went out, and wept bitterly; yea, a blessed Look from Christ will break the hardest Heart in the World. Wherefore, look thou unto Him; and if thou lookest up to Him, who knows, but that Christ from on high may look down upon thee. A Word from Christ will break thine Heart. We read in the Gospel of one that was Deaf and Dumb, *Mark 7. 34.* Christ said to him, *Ephphatha*, and then his Ears were opened. If Christ speak but one Word; if he does but say *Ephphatha*, be opened, thine Ears and Heart will be opened, as the Lord opened the Heart

Hardness of Heart. &c. 113

Heart of *Lydia*. And if the Lord Jesus Christ break thine Heart. He will heal it too; He is the Great Physician of Souls; and it is His Work to *Heal the Broken in Heart*. Amen, Lord Jesus.

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Sin and Danger

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Disobedience to the Gospel.

Matth. x. 14, 15.

Whoſoever ſhall not receive you, nor hear your Words; when you depart out of that Houſe, or City, ſhake off the Duſt of your Feet. Verily I ſay unto you, it ſhall be more tolerable for, the Land of Sodom and Gomorrah, in the Day of Judgment, than for that City.

I. **T**H E Context giveth us an Account of the firſt Commiſſion, which the Lord Jeſus Chriſt gave unto his Apoſtles to preach the Goſpel in Judea, confining them
to

to that Province only. In the Words before us there are three Particulars.

1. An Instruction to the Apostles, how they should demean themselves towards the Families or Towns that would slight their Gospel, when freely offer'd to them. *They were to shake off the Dust of their Feet against them*, as a Sign that that Sin of theirs made them the most abominable Creatures in the World, and that no further Communion was to be had with them.

2. Here is declared the Intolerable Punishment which Gospel-Despisers shall at last be exposed unto. *It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah than for them.* The Men of Sodom were wicked, and Sinners, exceedingly before the Lord, guilty they were of crying, and very grievous Sins, for which they were made a most terrible Example of Divine Vengeance, and they are now suffering the Vengeance of Eternal Fire. Nevertheless, the Day will come, when they that will not hear the Words of the Gospel preached to them, shall be in more Intolerable Misery than the vilest Sodomites or Gomorrheans.

3. It

of Disobedience to the Gospel. 117

3. It is here expressed when this shall be, *viz. In the Day of Judgment.* It may be God will not (altho' sometimes He does) make such Sinners against the Gospel Examples of Temporal Judgments, as it was with the *Sodomites*, but at the last Day, when all the Men in the World, or that ever were, or ever shall be, must stand before the Judgment-Seat of Christ; they who would not hear the Word of his Grace, shall hear a sadder Sentence pronounced upon them, than on *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah*. Wherefore the Doctrine which the Words afford unto us, is,

Doctr. *That Sinners who will not hear the Gospel, shall receive the worst Punishment of any in the World at the Day of Judgment.* The awful Truth before us may be confirmed in several Propositions.

Prop. 1. *Men that will not obey the Gospel may be said not to hear it.*

Disobedient Hearers, who turn a deaf Ear on the Call of the Gospel, are as if they heard it not. As for such Persons, *in hearing they do not hear*; there is an External Hearing, in respect of the Ears of the Body. If Men may in that Respect hear the Word of God, but will not, this Scripture lights heavy upon them. It is an Intolerable Contempt

Contempt of the Gospel, and of the Author of it, when the Lord sends his Ambassadors with Messages of Peace, but Sinful Creatures will not give them the Hearing; God is willing to treat with them about their Everlasting Welfare, but they will not so much as stir out of their Doors to hear what He has to say. Nevertheless, Men may thus far hear the Word, and yet for all that be said not to hear it; there is an *Internal*, as well as an *External* Hearing. There are the Ears of the Soul as well as of the Body. An Hearing with the Heart as well as with the outward Man. *Obedience* is called *Hearing*, Isa. 55. 3. *Hear*, i. e. Obey, and *your Souls shall live*. Because the Jews were disobedient to the Word of God, 'tis said of them, that they stopped their Ears, and that *they would not hear*; they made their Hearts as an Adamant, lest they should *hear the Law*, and the Words which the Lord of Hosts has sent in his Spirit by the former Prophets, Zeph. 7. 11, 12. There are three things required of all Men where the Gospel comes: They that will not yield Obedience thereunto, are the Persons whom this awful Scripture concerns.

1. *The Gospel commands Men to repent.*
 Acts 17. 30. The Times of Ignorance God

winked

winked at, but now *commands all Men everywhere to repent.* There is no Exception of Persons or Places, but all Men, be they high or low, rich or poor, old or young; where-ever they be, if the Gospel is sent unto them, God commands them to repent. But as for those Ignorant Souls, who have no Light of the Gospel, the Lord *winks at them:* He overlooketh them, as the Original Word imports. He does not seem to regard them, or care what becomes of them. The Doctrine of Repentance is Evangelical Doctrine. The Law says nothing of Repentance; it requires Men to live so, as that they should need no Repentance: Nor does it promise Mercy to the Penitent, only the Gospel calls upon Sinners to confess their Sins, to forsake them, and pray for the Pardon of them, and to turn unto the Lord; when the Lord Jesus Christ did in his own Person, and with his own most Sacred Mouth, Preach the Gospel, He taught Repentance; from the time that He began to Preach, He said, *Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at Hand, Mat. 4. 17.* Therefore Impenitent Sinners are they, that hear not the Gospel.

2. The Gospel does not only require Men to repent of Sin, but *that they should go to Christ,*

Christ, and trust in him alone for the Pardon of all their Sins, and the Eternal Salvation of their Souls. When therefore the Lord Jesus Christ did renew and enlarge the Commission of his Apostles, He said unto them, *Go ye into all the World, and preach the Gospel to every Creature. He that believeth shall be saved*, Mar. 16. 15, 16. So then every Creature, (that is, every Man, whom the *Hebrews* are wont to call by that Name of *Creature*, because Man is an Epitome of the Creation) that has the Offer of the Gospel, is required to believe on the Name of Jesus Christ. The Gospel commands Faith as well as Repentance. The Apostle giving a Summary Account of what He taught in all Places, and to all Persons, unto whom He preached the Gospel, He refers all unto those two Heads, *Repentance and Faith*, Acts 20. 21. testifying both to *Jews*, and also to *Greeks*, *Repentance toward God, and Faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ*. Hence the Gospel is called *the Word of Faith*, Rom. 10. 8. The Word of Faith which we preach. The Doctrine of the Gospel is so called, because it teaches Men, that Faith in Christ is their Duty, also *Objective-ly*, in that it is a received Faith; and *Effectively*, in that it works Faith. Wherefore

the Apostle said to the *Galatians*, *Received you the Spirit by the Works of the Law, or by the hearing of Faith?* He meaneth, by hearing the Gospel preached, which does both require and cause Faith, (when the Spirit of Christ comes with it) in the Souls of God's Elect, *Gal. 3. 2.* Yea, to believe, is the great Commandment of God in the Gospel, *1 John 3. 23.* *This is his Commandment, that we should believe on the Name of his Son Jesus Christ.* He does not only permit us to believe, but command us to believe on Christ; nor can we please God more in any thing, than by Obedience to this Commandment; for the chief Design in the Heart of God, is to advance and glorifie His Son Jesus Christ: He takes Pleasure in nothing more than in seeing him honoured: He would have all Men to honour His Son, as they honour himself. Now they that believe on him, trusting to his Righteousness alone for Salvation, put the highest Honour upon him that possibly can be. Unbelievers are the Persons that do not hear; yea, tho' a Man should hear Sermons every Sabbath-day, if he remains an Unbeliever still, he is one that does not hear. Unbelief is the greatest Disobedience to the Gospel.

3. *The Gospel requires Holiness in Life and Conversation, Phil. 1. 27.* Let your
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Conversation be as becomes the Gospel of Christ. If you are not of Blameless and Holy Conversations, you do not walk suitably to the Gospel of Christ. *The Grace of God, that brings Salvation, the Gospel which declares the Grace of God, and brings the glad Tidings of Salvation, teaches us to deny Ungodliness, and Worldly Lusts, and that we should live Soberly, Righteously, and Godly in this present World, Tit. 2. 11, 12.* Altho' the Gospel is called *the perfect Law of Liberty*, Jam. 1. 25. it does not give Men any Liberty to Sin, but shews them the only way to the Best and most Glorious Liberty. The way to obtain Liberty, not *for* but *from* Sin. It shews, that we are set at Liberty from the Ceremonial Law, we are freed from that Yoak of Bondage, and from the *Moral Law*, as a *Covenant*, and therefore from the *Curse* of that Holy Law, we are not under the Law, but under Grace; but Christians are not set at Liberty from that Law as a *Rule* of Obedience. The Gospel does so far confirm the Law, Rom. 3. 27. *Do we then make void the Law through Faith? God forbid; yea, we establish the Law.* The Gospel does not say to Men, that if they will trust to the Merit of Christ, they shall be saved, tho' they continue in their Sins still, but it bids them manifest their Faith by Works

Works of new Obedience, and declares, that the Faith which is not attended with Works of Sanctification, is no true justifying Faith. There were in the Primitive Times some *Nominal Christians*, who were *Antinomians*, pretending, that if Men did but trust to the Merit of Christ's Death, they should be saved, tho' they lived Lives never so contrary to the Law of Righteousness. Against these does *James* thunder in his Epistle, declaring, that they neither had nor could have any saving Faith. *Jam. 2. 14. What does it profit, my Brethren, tho' a Man say he has Faith, and have no Works? Can Faith save him? Wilt thou know, O vain Man, that that Faith without Works is dead? v. 20. It is very true, that Works of Piety, and Charity, and Righteousness, do not, nor can they ever justify the Person of a Sinner before God; only the Righteousness of Christ, apprehended by Faith, can do that; nevertheless, they may justify his Faith to be a true saving Faith. James says, that Abraham was justified by Works when he offer'd Isaac, yet he was justified before Isaac was born; but that great Act of Obedience shewed that his Faith was of the right sort. Faith wrought with his Works, and by Works was Faith made perfect. 'Tis not said, that his Works wrought with his Faith, as if Works*

had any Concurrence in his Justification, but his Faith with his Works. Faith always produceth good Works, and is perfected thereby; Works of Sanctification declare the *Perfection*, that is, the *Sincerity* of a Man's Faith, *Jam.* 2. 21, 22. Hence then if Men have the Gospel preached to them, and for all that continuē to live ungodly Lives, they must be numbred amongst them that obey not the Gospel.

Prop. 2. *That many who have the Gospel offered to them, nevertheless are disobedient thereunto.*

Some do, but all do not accept of the Grace offer'd in the Gospel. When Paul preached the Gospel to the *Jews*, which were at *Rome*, it is recorded, that *some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not*, *Acts* 28. 24. Nay, there are many that believe it not, it may be, whole Families; yea, whole Towns and Cities (as the Text before us intimates) will be Despisers of an offer'd Gospel. It is indeed true, that the Gospel seldom comes to any Place, but some or other are converted and saved by Means thereof. When the Providence of God brought the Gospel to *Athens*, certain Men believed, among whom was *Dionysius*, and a Woman, named *Damaris*, and others with them, *Acts* 17. 34. But there

were

were more Deriders of the Precious Truths of the Gospel, than Receivers of it in that Famous City. VVhen God sends his Word to be in a constant way preached in any Place, it is a Sign that He has some Elect there, and they will hear it, but others will not, *John 8. 47. He that is of God, heareth God's Words, you therefore hear them not, because you are not of God.* So when the Jewish Nation had the Offer of the Gospel, God's Elect amongst them received it gladly, but the rest (who were by far the greatest part of the Nation) would not hear, *Rom. 11. 7. The Election hath obtained, but the rest were blinded.* God had many of his Elect amongst the Gentiles, therefore He sent His Gospel among them, and they had Grace given them to obey it, *Acts 28. 28. The Salvation of God is sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it.* In some Places, where God sends his Gospel, there are many Elect Souls: So in the City of *Corinth*; from which Consideration the Apostle was encouraged to continue teaching the VVord of God amongst them, since the Lord had said to him, *I have much People in this City, Acts 18. 10, 11.* In *Ezekiel's* Vision concerning the Sanctuary Waters, 'tis said, *There shall be a very great Multitude of Fish, because these Waters shall come thither, for they shall be*
F 3 *healed,*

healed, and every thing shall live whither the River comes, Ezek. 47. 9. Now what are these *V*Waters, and what is this River, but the Gospel? When that began to be preached at *Jerusalem*, and from thence throughout the *V*World, *Living Waters went out from Jerusalem*, as another Prophet foretold that it would be, *Zech. 14. 8.* In some Places there is a Multitude of Fish to be caught by the Gospel: If those Holy *V*Waters come to any place, tho' never so Dead and Barren; yea, tho' it should be as bad as *Sodom* it self, there is some Fish to be made alive, some dead Souls, whom these Blessed *V*Waters must heal, and make them to live. But there is an awful *V*Word in the 11th Ver. of that 47th Chapter of *Ezekiel*, *The Miry Places and the Marishes shall not be healed, they shall be given to Salt.* Reprobate Sinners are fitly resembled to Miry Places and Marishes: The Waters from the Sanctuary come flowing to them, they are not healed, they are not converted thereby; no, they are given to Salt. That Tremendous Judgment of Spiritual Barrenness is inflicted on them; so then, many who hear the Gospel, yet in hearing do not hear. There have been those, who have positively and professedly rejected the Gospel; so did the *Jews*, when Christ himself was a Minister
and

and Preacher amongst them, *Mat. 23. 37.* O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, *how often would I have gathered thy Children together, and you would not?* He came to His own, and His own received him not, *John 1. 11.* And afterwards, when the Lord sent his Apostles to make the first Tender of the Gospel to them, they slighted it; wherefore Paul and Barnabas said to them plainly and boldly, *It was necessary that the Word of God should first have been spoken to you*; Christ had commanded that they should have the first Offer of the Gospel, and therefore it was necessary. *But seeing you put it from you, lo we turn to the Gentiles, Acts 13. 46.* But there are many, that altho' they do not professedly reject the Gospel as the Jews did, nevertheless they do not obey it: They do not in Words say to him that preaches to them, as they of old did to the Prophet, *Jer. 44. 16.* *As for the Word which thou hast spoken to us in the Name of the Lord, we will not hearken to thee.* Nevertheless, practically they say no less. In the Parable concerning the Sower, there were four sorts of Ground, and but one of them good. Amongst Hearers of the Word of God, in many Places, in many Congregations, there is not one in four that obeys it. And *how does this come to pass?* What is the reason that Men receive not the

Gospel, when God does mercifully send it to them?

Ans^w. 1. *The Gospel is a Doctrine, which suits not with Carnal Reason:* There are Mysteries in the Gospel, which are above Natural, and contrary to that Carnal Reason that is in Men. For a Man to have Eternal Life given to him, and yet no Works or Righteousness of his own to have any Hand in procuring it, seemeth strange and unreasonable. A learned, but a proud *Papist*, has not been ashamed to profess, *That if God would give him Heaven Gratis, or without doing something to merit it, he would not accept of it from the Almighty on those Terms.* For a Man to expect Eternal Life, because another died for him, and that a poor mean Man, as to his outward Condition in this World, and one too that was Hanged and Crucified, should be the Saviour of the World, seems an absurd Imagination to Carnal Reason. Altho' the way to Salvation, revealed in the Gospel, is the most admirable Contrivance of Infinite Wisdom, nevertheless, Carnal Reason judgeth it to be Folly, **1 Cor. 1. 23.** *We preach Christ crucified unto the Jews a Stumbling-block, and to the Greeks Foolishness.* The *Greeks*, who were some of them the most Learned Men in the World, thought, that to expect Eternal Salvation from

from a Man that had been Crucified, was Foolishness. The *Gentiles* of old were wont in a way of Scoff and Scorn to call Christians *Credentes*; Men that would believe any thing. They looked on them as the silliest Fools that lived on the Earth, for believing such incredible things, as those revealed in the Gospel. Hence it is a rare thing for Men of great Parts and Learning to become real Christians, 1 Cor. 1. 26. *Not many Wise are called*, some such there are, but not many. In *Athens*, where was the chief *University*, and most Learned Men in all *Greece*, there were but a very few that believed, when the Gospel was preached to them, tho' an Apostle, and the most accomplished of all the Apostles, was sent to preach to the *Philosophers* there. *Manlius* speaks of a Physician, that said to his familiar Friend, *I thought thou hadst been a Man of some Wit and Learning, but now I see that thou art a Fool, because thou believest the things which are written in the Gospels.*

2. *It is from Satan that Men obey not the Gospel.*

Where that Light prevails, it shines down his Kingdom of Darknes. The Devil cannot rest where the Gospel cometh, as is intimated by the Parable of the Unclean Spirit going out of Men, and seeking for

Rest, but finding none, and then returning into the House from whence he came, with seven Devils for one before, *Mat. 12.43,44.* The preaching of the Gospel amongst the *Jews* disquieted the Devil, so that he was driven to seek his Habitation amongst the *Gentiles*, but the Gospel coming amongst them, he could have no Rest there neither, and therefore returned to the *Jews* again, who after they had refused the Gospel, were seven times more wicked than before. Nothing disturbs the Devil so much as the clear Light of the Gospel. *Dagon* fell before the Ark, so does Satan's Kingdom before the Gospel. Therefore when Christ sent his Disciples to preach the Gospel, he said to them, *I beheld Satan as Lightning fall from Heaven, Luke 10. 18.* The Lord Jesus Christ recovered the World out of Satan's Hands, by causing the Gospel to be preached. With that Bow, and with those Arrows did he go forth, conquering the Nations before him. It is reported, that the *Mahometan* Preachers have always a Sword by them in their Pulpits, to signify, that their Religion must be propagated with the Sword: But our Saviour Christ did not propagate his Kingdom in any such way. The great Tyrants of the World have enlarged their Dominions by Sword, and
Fires,

Fires, and Tortures, and Gibbets, for such as would not submit to them. Christ's Kingdom is not advanced by any such Methods, only by the plain Preaching of the Cross, before which the Devil is not able to stand. Hence Satan does all that ever he can, to keep Men from receiving the Gospel; they shall never have it offer'd to them, if he can hinder it. The Devil was very unwilling that *Paul* should go to *Thessalonica*, 1 *Thes.* 2. 18. *I would have come to you once and again, but Satan hindered.* He was afraid of such a Preacher as *Paul*; but if the Providence of God brings the Gospel to any Place or People, whether the Devil will or no; he does all that he can possibly to hinder the Success of it, that in hearing they may not hear. In the Parable of the Sower, *Mark* 4. 15. it is said, *These are they by the way side when the Word is sown; when they have heard, Satan comes immediately, and takes away the Word that was sown in their Hearts.* How common is it for Men, tho' they were not sleepy before, if they are hearing a good Sermon, they grow drowzy, and it may be, fall fast asleep before the Sermon is half done: This is from Satan, who comes immediately whilst the Word is yet in speaking; and by making those that sit under it fall asleep, he

he takes away the Seed that was sown in their Hearts ; or, he fills their Minds with Worldly or Impertinent Thoughts, that they are as if they had heard nothing at all.

3. *The Gospel is an Holy Doctrine.*

It is an Heavenly Dispensation ; it calls upon Men, not to seek after Treasure on Earth, but in Heaven. And that they should be willing to part with those Sins, which are as dear to them as a Right Hand or a Right Eye. It is a Doctrine, contrary not only to that Carnal Reason, but to those Corrupt and Carnal Affections, which are in Men. Sinners hate to be reformed, and therefore they do not love the Word that would reform them, every one that doth Evil hates the Light, neither cometh he to the Light, lest his Deeds should be reprov'd, *John 3. 20.* From such Causes as these is it, that Sinners will not hear, will not obey the Gospel.

Prop. 3. *Such Persons shall at the Day of Judgment receive the sorest Punishment of any Sinners in the World.*

The Damnation of the *Sodomites* will not be so intolerable in the Day of Judgment as those that have Contemned the Offer of the Gospel.

Two things may be here mentioned as *Demonstrations* of the Truth before us.

Demonstr. 1. Gospel Despisers are the guiltiest Sinners in the World; therefore they will at last be exposed to the sorest Punishment. Thus does the Apostle argue, *Heb. 2. 2, 3. For if the Word spoken by Angels was stedfast, and every Transgression and Disobedience received a just Remission of Reward, how shall we escape, if we neglect so great Salvation, which at first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him.* They that slight the Gospel, which is Salvation; great Salvation; and so great Salvation, as the like was never heard of; are greater, and more guilty Sinners, than those who have been guilty of Disobedience to the Law only, wherefore they cannot escape the sorest Vengeance of Heaven. Thus also does the Apostle reason, *Heb. 10. 28, 29. He that despised Moses's Law, died without Mercy, of how much sorer Punishment suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who has trodden under Feet the Son of God?* The greater the Sin, the greater the Punishment. Indeed it is not always so in this World; great Sinners may escape deserved Punishment, and they that have not been notorious Sinners, may fall under very awful

ful Temporal Judgments. Suppose you, that those *Galileans*, whose Blood *Pilate* mingled with their Sacrifices, were Sinners above all the *Galileans*? I tell you, Nay: Or those Eighteen, upon whom the Tower in *Siloe* fell, and slew them; think you that they were Sinners above all Men that dwell in *Jerusalem*? I tell you, Nay. *Luke. 13. 3, 4.* But in the World to come, they that have been the greatest Sinners, shall be the greatest Sufferers. At the Day of Judgment God will render to every Man according to what his Works have been. Now Gospel Despisers are the most guilty Sinners on the Earth. For,

1. *They sin against Light.* They are disobedient to the Heavenly Vision; so Sin against the Light of Nature, (as the *Sodomites* did) is fearful, but to sin against the Light of the Gospel, is on divers Accounts worse. For the most Glorious Light that ever did shine from Heaven on the Souls of Men, is the Light of the Gospel. It is said of the Gospel, that *the Holy Ghost has sent it down from Heaven, 1 Pet. 1. 12.* Therefore to withstand that Light, must needs be dreadfully dangerous. A Man that sinneth ignorantly, is not guilty like him that sinneth against Knowledge. *Jam. 4. 17. To him that knoweth to do Good, and doth*

doth it not, to him it is Sin. He has heinous Sin and Guilt on his Soul. Impenitent Unbelievers under the Gospel know how to do Good, and do it not. If they had never heard a Sermon preached to them, they would have had no Sin, in comparison of what now they have. Doth not Christ say as much? *John 15. 22. If I had not come and spoken to them, they had not had Sin, but now they have no Cloak for their Sin.* They would have had no sin comparatively, but now they are most inexcusable. They are First-rate Sinners, who shut their Eyes against the Light, for which Cause they must needs fall under the heaviest Condemnation that can be, *John 3. 19. This is the Condemnation, that Light is come into the World, and Men love Darknes rather than Light.* At the Day of Judgment God will render unto them that obey not the Truth, Indignation and Wrath, Tribulation and Anguish, to every Soul of Man that doth Evil; *of the Jew first*, and also of the *Gentile*, Rom. 2. 9. Why to the *Jew* first? Because the *Jew* had not only the Light of Nature, but the Means of Grace, which the *Gentile* had not.

2. *They that despise, or disobey the Gospel, sin exceedingly against the Grace of God.* Yea, against that Grace, which brings,

brings, which offers Salvation to Sinners: 'Tis called *the Gospel of the Grace of God*, Acts 20. 24. Then Disobedience thereunto is a slighting of Grace; and truly it is a stonishing Grace, that ever the Great God should offer Terms of Mercy, and declare himself willing to be reconciled to them that have sinned against him, considering how great the Injury is that is done to him by the Sins of Men, and how easie it is for Him to ease Himself of his Adversaries, and to avenge Himself of His Enemies, and to gain Eternal Glory to His own Name, by making their Souls a Sacrifice to His Infinite Justice. They that despise this Grace, do in that Respect sin more heinously than ever *Sodom* and *Gomorrab* did, who never had one Offer of the Gospel, or one Sermon preached to them about Christ and Salvation. It was said to *Capernaum*, *If the mighty Works which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained to this Day*, Matth. 11. 23. so had they been told, that in case they did repent, and turn from their horrid Sins, and believe on the Son of God, all their Sins should be washed away in his Blood, who knows how far such blessed Tidings would have affected them, or what Reformation it would have caused in them? The Grace,

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the free Favour of God, is very signal to them that have the Gospel preached to them; for the greatest part of Mankind by far have it not, but sit in Darkness, and in the Region of the Shadow of Death. Therefore they that will not hear nor obey the Gospel, are guilty of a great Sin, which but few in the World comparatively are guilty of; yea, of a Sin, which the Devils were never guilty of: For when once they had sinned, *God spared them not, but cast them down to Hell,* 2 Pet. 2. 4. The Lord did not enter into any Treaty of Peace with them, or make so much as one Offer of Grace to them, in case they would repent, and turn unto Him: He might have suffer'd all fallen Men, as well as all fallen Angels, to have perished for ever; but He has been so Gracious as to find out a way for our Salvation, and by the Gospel, to reveal it unto us. VVhat Sinners are they that regard nothing of all this? How will such Despisers of Grace one Day wonder and perish?

3. *They that disobey the Gospel, are guilty of murdering their own Souls.*

Hence Wisdom (that is Christ) has said, *He that sinneth against me, wrongeth his own Soul; all they that hate me, love Death,* Prov. 8. 36. Such a Sinner wrongs and ruins his own Soul, he is (as the Hebrew Word there

there used imports) a *Vulture* to his own Soul. A Murderer is a guilty Creature, Self-Murder is the most heinous of all Murders; Soul Murder is the worst Self-Murder. This are they guilty of, who disobey the Gospel: It was therefore said to the Gospel-despising *Jews*, Acts 13. 46. *You judge your selves unworthy of Everlasting Life.* q. d. If you were to be your own Judges, you must condemn your selves: Everlasting Life is offer'd to you in the Gospel; by putting it away, you declare your selves to be worthy of Eternal Death: VVhat can you do more to bring the Guilt of the Blood of your own Souls upon your own Heads? VVell did the Apostle say to some other *Jews* that refused the Gospel, *Your Blood be upon your own Heads*, Acts 18. 6. They were guilty of the Blood of their own Souls. The very Thought of this will be a most intolerable Torment in the VVorld to come for ever. If an *Israelite* that was bitten with a fiery Serpent, should have refused to look unto the Brazen Serpent, after he was told that his Life depended thereon, would he not have been guilty of his own Destruction? So when Sinners, whose Souls are bitten with the fiery Serpents of Hell, are by the Gospel inform'd, that if they go to Christ, they shall

shall live, and not die, but they chuse to die rather; are they not Destroyers of their own Souls? If a mortally wounded Man shall wilfully refuse an only Remedy, he is guilty of his own Death: And do not Sinners, who refuse an only Saviour, deserve to be Damned - Eternally and Intolerably? The Heinousness of their Guilt is one Demonstration of it.

Demonstr. 2. It is evident in that such Sinners provoke God infinitely.

No Sin does inflame that VVrath which burns to the bottom of Hell, like Disobedience to the Gospel: Unbelief is in a peculiar manner a God-provoking, and therefore above others, a Soul-damning Iniquity. There were some, unto whom God swore in His VVrath, that they should not enter into His Rest.— *And to whom sware He, that they should not enter into his Rest, but to them that believed not?* Heb. 3. 18. God told the Children of Israel, that if they would venture themselves, and rely upon him, the Land of Canaan should be theirs. But in this thing they believed not the Lord, therefore He was VVrath, and sware, that not an Unbelieving Soul of them should enter into that good Land: So God in the Gospel declares to Men, that if they will
submit

submit to His Son Jesus Christ, Heaven shall be theirs, and that therefore they should hearken to him. Now to disbelieve and disobey this VVord of the Lord, cannot but be an Infinite Provocation to him. For

1. *Such Sinners despise the most loving and kind Offer that ever was.*

No Man had ever a better Offer than that which the Gospel makes a Proposal of: It offers Christ with all his Benefits; all the desirable things which this VVorld can afford, are not worthy to be mentioned in the same Day, with the Glorious things promised in the Everlasting Gospel. Now to despise Kindnesses is very provoking; great Ingratitude is an high Provocation: They that refuse the Gospel are the most ungrateful Creatures that ever lived: They put a Slight upon the most Glorious Demonstration of the Kindness and Love of God towards Men that ever was, *John 3. 16. God so loved the World, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have Everlasting Life.* Never was there such Love as this, so as the like never was. And therefore to despise this Love is such a Sin, as there is none like it.

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2. *Gospel Despisers are Contemners of the Son of God:* Yea, they trample him under Foot. Nothing is so dear to God as his Son Jesus Christ. It is a Celebrated Saying amongst the *Jews*, *That God made the World for the sake of the Messiah.* Christ is dearer to God than all the Creatures in the whole World. All the Men on Earth, and all the Angels in Heaven, are not so dear to God as Jesus Christ is. He is God's *Dear Son*; His *Beloved Son*; the Soul of God delights in him, and therefore nothing is or can be more provoking to God, than for Men to despise the Son of his Love. But thus do they who continue in their Sins and Unbelief, when the Gospel is preached to them. They practically say, we care not for Christ: As *Jereboam's Faction* said, *1 Kings 12. 16. What Portion have we in David? neither have we Inheritance in the Son of Jessai.* This is the Language of Unbelief; we care not for a Portion in Christ; we regard not an Interest in the Son of God: Nay, Sinners set an higher Price, a greater Value on the vilest things, than on the most precious Lord Jesus Christ; so do they Contemn him. They prefer this dirty World above him; they will rather part with Christ, than part with the World, when

when the Gospel calls them to do it. Is not this to condemn him? Nay, Sinners give Satan the Preference to Christ; they chuse rather to continue to serve and obey Satan, than Christ: Nay, they prize Sin (which is a viler thing than the Devil himself) more than they prize Christ, for that is the Question where the Gospel comes, who shall be loved most, Christ or the World, Christ or Satan, Christ or Sin? How did the Jews provoke God, miserably to destroy them, when they said, *Not Jesus, but Barabbas?* And do not they infinitely provoke him, who by their continuing in Unbelief and Disobedience to the Gospel, say, Not Christ, but the World; not Christ, but Satan; not Christ, but Sin, is that which we would have to reign over us.

3. *They that disobey the Gospel, are Guilty of most horrible Blasphemy.*

And do they not then provoke the Lord, *1 John 5. 10. He that believeth not God, has made him a Lyar, because He believeth not the Record that God gave of his Son.* The Unbeliever says that Christ is not the Son of God: He says so in Effect, tho' it may be not in Words; yet that's the Language of his Unbelief, that the Word which

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God has given of Christ is not true. VVhen Christ was baptized, God from Heaven said, *This is my Son.* That's not so, says the Unbeliever. And again, when Christ was Transfigured, there came a Voice from the excellent Glory, saying, *This is my Son:* That's a Lye, says the horrid Unbeliever. Thus does he make God a Lyar: Men are provoked, they can't bear to have the Lye given to them; and do we think that the Great God of Heaven will endure it, that Unbelievers should make him a Lyar. The Truth is, that if a Man would be so wicked as to sit down, and think, and study with himself how he might provoke God to Anger, he would not do it more effectually than by Disobedience to the Gospel.

II. Let us proceed in the Fear of God to make some Application of the Doctrine, which has been thus explained and confirmed.

The first Use shall be for Instruction.

Several things may for our further Instruction be inferred from the Text and Doctrine before us.

Instr. 1. If the Judgment to come will be an Intolerable Day to them that disobey the Gospel, then the contrary is to be affirmed

firmed of them that yield a due Obedience thereunto; *The Day of Judgment shall be unto them a most comfortable and blessed Day*; they shall be the happy Subjects of all the Good and Blessedness which is contained in that comprehensive Word Salvation: *For Christ is the Author of Eternal Salvation unto them that obey him*, Heb. 5. 9. Not a Salvation of the Body only, but of the Soul; not a Temporal, but an Eternal Salvation, is by the Gospel assured unto all them who obey that Word of Christ. That dreadful Sentence of Eternal Death, which the Law pronounceth on every Transgressor, the Gospel declares it to be reversed by a Gracious Pardon, Rom. 8. 1. *There is therefore now no Condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the Flesh, but after the Spirit.* It is not said, that there never was a Condemnation belonging to them, but now there is none at all. They that have Faith in Christ Jesus, evidenced by their walking not after the Flesh, but after the Spirit, there is no Eternal Condemnation to them; that which was, is for Christ's sake repealed. The Gospel does (as has been shewed) require Men to repent and believe withal, assuring them, that if they do so, their

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Sins shall, for the sake of the Name of Christ, be forgiven. When therefore Christ sent his Messengers abroad in the World, *He commanded them to preach Repentance and Remission of Sins in his Name,* Luke 24. 47. Yea, all the Sins of every Penitent Believer on Christ, are for his sake for ever pardoned. *Acts 13. 38, 39. Be it known unto you, that through this Man is preached unto you the Forgiveness of Sins, and by him all that believe are justified from all things.* This is the sweet Voice of the Gospel; suppose them to have been never so great Sinners, if penitent and believing Sinners; they are pardoned Sinners. We read in the Gospel of a Woman that was a Sinner, that is, a vile and infamous Sinner, *Luke 7. 37.* but in the next Verse, we read of her unfeigned Repentance: *She washed the Feet of Christ with her Tears.* Upon this 'tis said in v. 47. *Her Sin, which were many, are forgiven.* What Sinners were the Jews, who Crucified the Son of God? There never was, nor could there be a greater Murder committed. Nevertheless, such of them as afterwards obeyed the Gospel, had that and all other their Sins remitted. *Peter* preached the Gospel to them, and they be-
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lieved it. Repent (said he) and be baptized in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, for the Remission of Sins, Acts 2. 38. They did repent, and were wounded at the Heart for what they had done, and as a Sign thereof, they were Baptized into the Name of Christ. For in those Days, to submit to Baptism was a great Evidence of true Repentance, inasmuch as He that was Baptized into the Name of Christ, thereby endangered the Loss of his Estate, Liberty, Relations, Life, and all that was dear unto him, in this World; when they thus manifested their Repentance, their great Sins were all forgiven to them. What a Sinner had Paul been before his Conversion? He was a Persecutor, and a Blasphemer, but upon his turning to God in Jesus Christ, he found Mercy, which made him say, *This is a faithful Saying, and worthy of all Acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the World to save Sinners, of whom I am chief*, Tim. 1. 15. One who afterwards died a Martyr, was converted by reading these Words of Paul. The Blood of Christ is through Faith, sprinkled on the Soul of the penitent Believer. And so, supposing his Sins to be the most heinous that ever were committed, that pro-

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cious Soul-cleansing Blood will make him spotless and guiltless before the Lord. David by Faith knew this, which made him pray, as in *Psal.* 51. 2. *Wash me thoroughly from mine Iniquity, cleanse me from my Sin.* He prayeth that his Soul might be washed in the Blood of Christ, and then he believed, that notwithstanding his having been guilty of Bloody and Filthy Crimes, Christ's Blood would purifie his Heart; wherefore he adds in *v.* 7. *Purge me with Hyssop*; Lepers, and other unclean Persons under the Law, had the Blood of the Creature that was Sacrificed, sprinkled upon them with a Bunch of Hyssop seven Times, signifying that the Souls of Believers are perfectly cleansed from the Guilt of Sin, by the Blood of Christ, who has been Sacrificed for them; and this makes them *whiter than the Snow*, as David there speaks, notwithstanding his grievous Sins. And inasmuch as the Sins of them that obey the Gospel are all pardoned, their Souls must needs be saved; nothing can keep their Souls out of Heaven, but only Sin; nor can their Sins do it, if they be repented of, and pardoned in the Blood of Christ. The Gospel assures the Believer, that he shall as certainly have Everlasting Life in

Heaven, as if he were there already. *John* 5. 24. *He that heareth my Word (says Christ) and believeth on him that sent me, has Everlasting Life, and shall not come into Condemnation, but is passed from Death unto Life.* This Sentence of Pardon and Life, which the Gospel pronounceth on the Believer, will, by the Son of God himself, be declared before all the World *in the Day of Judgment.* Every penitent Believer on Christ shall then have a Publick Acquittance and Absolution before all Angels and Men. *Acts* 3. 19. *Repent and be Converted, that your Sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the Presence of the Lord.* Their Sins are blotted out of God's Book as soon as ever they have unfeignedly repented of them, but in the Day of Judgment this shall be openly declared: In that Day Unbelievers shall be Sentenced to Death, and Believers (being made Righteous through Christ) unto Eternal Life. *Matth.* 25. 34. *Then shall the King say to them on his Right Hand, Come ye Blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the Foundation of the World:* So then the Day of Judgment will be a comfortable Day unto Believers; a Time of Refreshing; they shall

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shall find Mercy in that Day; it will be the happiest Day that ever they saw. *Tit. 2. 13.* That blessed Hope. Their Eternal Salvation will be consummated in that Day. *Heb. 9. 28.* Christ was once offer'd to bear the Sins of many, and to them that look for him shall He appear the second time without Sin, unto Salvation. Nor can it be otherwise, since they that do by Faith receive the Gospel, are nearly related to Christ, who is ordained to be the Judge of all the World: The Judge is their singular Friend, and near Kinsman. When some informed the Lord Jesus Christ that his Brethren desired to speak with him, His Reply was, *My Brethren are those which bear the Word of God, and do it, Luke 8. 21.*

Inf. 2. *The greatest Misery of Sinners is yet to come:* It is therefore said, It shall be more tolerable for Sodom than for them that reject the Gospel. The most intolerable part of their Punishment is not that which is at present, but that which shall be hereafter. As the greatest Happiness of Believers is future; suppose a Godly Man to be in never such Worldly Prosperity; it is indeed a rare thing for a Holy Man to enjoy great Earthly Felicity; for the most part God giveth that unto those whom He

does not intend to give Heaven unto: Wherefore Christ said, *Wo unto you that are rich, for you have received your Consolation*, Luk. 6. 24. Nevertheless, some few Instances there are of Pious Men abounding with Earthly Comforts; but all their Treasure on Earth is nothing, compared with the Inheritance which is reserved in Heaven for them. As for the Glory which shall be revealed, neither their present Adversity nor Prosperity is worthy to be compared with it. Thus also must we say concerning the Misery of Sinners: How often do Sinners in this Life complain (as *Cain* did) that their Punishment is greater than they can bear? There are some Sinners in such Misery, as that they would think themselves happy if they might be dispatched out of the World: Like those that were tormented with the Locusts in the *Revelation*; who sought Death, but could not find it, and desired to die, but Death fled from them, Rev. 9. 6. *Mahometans* (those Locusts were such) are so cruel to their Slaves, as they often wish for Death: But let their present Misery be never so grievous, that in the future World will be far more intolerable; the Sinner worst is to come: And when does it come

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Ans. 1. It begins at the Hour of Death: For a Sinner is no sooner dead, but his Immortal Soul is in Hell. Now tho' this Earth is a miserable Place to some, Hell is infinitely worse. *Dives* was no sooner dead, but 'tis said of him, that in Hell he lift up his Eyes, being in torment: He made a doleful Cry, *I am tormented in this Flame;* and *Oh!* (said he) *I am in a Place of Torment:* He begged as for his Life that he might have but so much as a Drop of Water; but Hell is the Pit wherein is no Water; Fire, but no Water: The Souls there have not a Drop of Comfort to mitigate their Sorrows. It is said concerning the People that once lived in *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah*, *that they suffer the Vengeance of Eternal Fire*, Jude 7. In respect of their Bodies they did suffer the Vengeance of Fire, but that Fire was not Eternal, but in respect of their Souls, the *Sodomites* are suffering the Vengeance of a Fire that is Eternal. The Sinners of the old World, who were disobedient to the Word of God preached to them by *Noah*; their Souls are now in Hell. The Apostle says of them, *that their Spirits are now in Prison*, 1 Pet. 3. 19. Hell is the wofullest Prison that can be thought of. Ever since those Sinners

were drowned, (which is now Four Thousand Years ago) their Souls have been in that Prison, and in grievous Misery there; for which Cause they are represented in the Scripture, as sighing and groaning, as Men in great Anguish use to do. *Job 26. 5.* The Words which are there translated, *Dead things are formed under the Waters, and the Inhabitants thereof*; according to the Hebrew Original run thus. *The Giants sigh under the Waters with their Inhabitants*; meaning the Sinners of the old World, who were many of them Giants; they, with the rest of the Inhabitants in Hell, sigh and wail, because of their helpless Misery.

2. *Much more at the Day of Judgment*; then *Sodom's* worst, and every Sinner's worst, that shall die in his Sins, will come upon him. As it is with the fallen Angels; the Devil and all his Angels are now in great Misery, Chains of Darkness are upon them; but they shall be in more grievous Darkness of Misery at the Day of Judgment, than what at present they are in: Therefore *Luke* speaks of a Multitude of Devils, which begged of Christ that He would not *command them to go into the Deep*, *Luke 8. 31.* which sheweth, that they

they are not as yet in that Depth of Misery which they shall hereafter be in. In *Matthew* they cry out, *Art thou come to torment us before the Time*, Matth. 8. 29. After the Day of Judgment they will be in more intolerable Torment than what at present they are in. So it is with the Damned Souls; the Day of Judgment will be to them the saddest Day that ever was; when it is, that all the Inhabitants of Hell never think of the Day of Judgment without Horror and Dread: For they all know that then is the Day for their Execution. Now, if but Twenty Persons are Executed in one Day, it is an awful thing; but what a fearful Day will that be, when Millions of Millions shall be brought to their Execution? It is a dreadful Death, which they shall then be Sentenced unto; in the Scripture it is often resembled to a Death by Burning: Yea, the Second Death is expressed by that of being cast into the *Lake which burns with Fire and Brimstone*, Rev. 21. 8. Fire causeth great Pain; but if Brimstone be added to it, that makes the Pain more intolerable: Some say, that if but two or three Drops of burning Brimstone falls on a Man's Hand, the Torment of it will make him to roar out; but what

then is it, when the whole Body shall be in a Lake of burning Brimstone? Yet these Expressions are but Metaphors; the Death which Sinners at the Day of Judgment shall be Sentenced unto, and that Sentence executed upon them, will be infinitely more intolerable than any material Fire and Brimstone. That which makes the Punishment the more, yea, most intolerable, is the Everlastingness of it. *Matth. 25. 46. The wicked shall go away into Everlasting Punishment*; their Misery will be easeless and endless. *Rev. 14. 11. They have no Rest Day nor Night*; not so much as one Day, nor one Night, nor one Hour, nor one Moment shall they have any Rest or Ease throughout Eternal Ages. When Eternity is added to Extremity, it makes the Misery to be most intolerable. A Man in Despair once said, *If I were to be in Hell for a Thousand Years, methinks that might be endured; but when I think of Eternity, I am amazed.* Truly it is a Soul-amazing, a Soul-confounding Thought, when a miserable Creature has been in the Fire as many Millions of Ages as there are Stars in Heaven, to be no nearer unto an End of his Sorrows than he was the first Day it began, how dreadful is that? Can the Sinner's Heart

Heart endure, or can his Hands be strong, when this shall come upon him? But thus it will be at the Day of Judgment, which is therefore called *Eternal Judgment*, because Men shall be to all Eternity, as the Day of Judgment shall find them and leave them. *Heb. 6. 2.* The Wrath of the Eternal God in all the Fulness of it, does then, and not till then, come upon Sinners. Hence 'tis called *the Wrath to come*, *Mat. 3. 7.* *Who has warned you to flee from the Wrath to come?* The Day of Judgment is called the Day of Wrath. *Job 21. 30.* *The Wicked shall be brought forth to the Day of Wrath:* As Malefactors are brought forth out of Prison, in order to their Execution, so are Sinners brought out of the Prison of the Grave at the Day of Judgment, that so the Wrath of the Almighty God may be poured out upon them for ever.

Inf. 3. Sinners in the World to come shall not all suffer alike, as to Degrees of Punishment.

Altho' they that shall suffer least will be inexpressibly miserable, nevertheless, some will have a more intolerable Hell of it than others shall: Contemners of the Gospel shall be punished more intolerably than the People of *Sodom and Gomorrah:*

And

And the *Sodomites* shall have a greater Punishment than many other Sinners, who have not been so wicked as they. All that are Sinners are not equally so; for all Sins are not of the same size. *Ezek. 8. 6. Seest thou the great Abominations which the House of Israel committeth? Turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater Abominations.* There are some Sins which are Abominations; some which are great Abominations; some which are greater Abominations than others: Altho' no Sin is to be accounted small, because the least Sin is High-Treason against the Infinite Majesty, yet some Sins are comparatively small, if laid in the Balance with others. Some are compared to *Motes*, others to *Beams*, *Matth. 7. 2, 4.* some to *Gnats*, others to *Camels*; *Matth. 23. 24.* There's a vast Difference between a Camel and a Gnat; Degrees of Punishment in the World to come will be according to the Measure of Men's Sinning and Guiltiness whilst they were in this World. There are some that have not sinned half so much, nor have half that Guilt upon their Souls as other Sinners have; *Ezek. 16. 51. Neither has Samaria committed half thy Sins.* The Punishment of Sin proceeds from the incensed Displeasure of

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of an Holy God; but some Sins are greater Provocations than others, *Neh. 9. 18.* *They had wrought great Provocations:* It is said, *Ephraim provoked him to Anger most bitterly.* *Hos. 12. 14.* Such bitter Provocations, without Repentance, end in the most bitter Plagues.

1. They that have sinned out of Ignorance, shall receive a more tolerable Punishment than those that have sinned knowingly, and against the Light of their own Consciences. *Luke 12. 47, 48.* *The Servant which knew his Lord's Will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his Will, shall be beaten with many Stripes: But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of Stripes, shall be beaten with few Stripes.*

2. Persons who have been Civil, Sober, and Temperate, and it may be, Exemplary for *Moral Virtue*, if they have not Faith in Christ, will go to Hell when they die: But their Punishment will not be so great as theirs, who have lived in Scandalous Sins; especially they that have indulged themselves in Debaucheries, and vile Uncleanesses, shall, at the Day of Judgment, be condemned to the forest Fire in the Furnace of Hell, as a Punishment for their
burning

burning in abominable Lusts. There are some in the World that will meet in the Night on purpose for a *Debauch*: What a fearful Place in Hell is there prepared and reserved for them! 2 Pet. 2. 10. *The Lord has reserved the Unjust unto the Day of Judgment to be punished, but chiefly them that walk after the Flesh in the Lust of Uncleanness.* And the more any have indulged themselves in the Pleasures of Sin, the greater shall their Intolerable Damnation be at the last: They will find those Pleasures to be bitter Pleasures, when it will be too late for them to repent of their Folly. Rev. 18. 7. *How much she lived deliciously, so much Torment and Sorrow give her.*

3. And what shall be thought of *Hypocrites*, who, it may be, are not openly Profane, but make a Pretence of Sanctity, when their Hearts are not right in the Sight of God; An Hypocrite is one that divideth his Heart between God and Sin, Christ and the World, and therefore his Doom is, *Divide him, cut him asunder, and appoint his Portion with Hypocrites; there shall be weeping and gnashing of Teeth,* Matth. 24. 51. The forest Punishment is expressed by that of the Portion of Hypocrites;

crites; and whereas they are said to weep and gnash their Teeth, that shews, that their Misery will be intolerable. There are *self-deceiving Hypocrites*, that do not know that they are such: How lamentable will their Case be at the Day of Judgment, when they, who verily thought that they should have stood at the Right Hand of Christ, shall see themselves at his Left Hand, and so all their Hopes of Salvation disappointed for ever! There are also *self-condemned Hypocrites*, who know, that their Pretences to Religion are but *Pretexts* to serve a Design. Such an one was *Abshalom*, and such an one was *Jezebel*, and such were some of the *Pharisees*. They would be long in Prayer, that they might be thought to be Persons of great Devotion and Religion; by this Means they deceived silly Widows, who trusted them with their Estates; which when they have got them into their Possession, they would defraud and devour the true Owners thereof, *Matth.* 23. 14. *You devour Widows Houses, and for a Pretence, make long Prayers, therefore you shall receive the greater Damnation.* Hypocrisie will aggravate Damnation. This made *Elibu* say, *The Hypocrites in Heart heap up Wrath*, *Job* 36. 13. There is

is a mighty Heap, a Mountain of Wrath laid up for Hypocrites, which will fall upon them at the Day of Judgment.

4. *Apostates*, (who indeed are no better than Hypocrites) from the Blessed Truths and Ways of God, will have a sorer Punishment inflicted on them at the last Day, than may be said of other Sinners. *Prov. 14. 14. The Backslider in Heart shall be filled with his own Ways*; he shall have enough of his Backsliding one Day. Sometimes Apostates are made fearful Examples of Divine Displeasure in this World, as it was with miserable *Spira*; who, upon his renouncing the Truth, thought he heard a Voice saying to him, *Go thou Apostate, and receive the Sentence of thy Damnation*. So great was the Horror of his Conscience, as that he professed he did not think that the Damned in Hell could be in greater Misery than he endured. When the Lord says, *If any Man draw back, my Soul shall have no Pleasure in him*, *Heb. 10. 38*. The Meaning is, that if any Sinners in the World shall fall under the Displeasure of God, such shall. There are some, who prove *Apostates* as to the *Practical Part of Religion*; they did once run well; they set upon a Course of Religious Duties; they would
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read the Scripture, hear Sermons, and pray in Secret, but they have cast off the thing that is Good. All their Goodness is vanished like the Morning Cloud, and like the Early Dew. How intolerable will their Condemnation be? *It had been better for them, not to have known the Way of Righteousness, than after they have known, to turn from the Holy Commandment,* 2 Pet. 2. 21. Apostacy is worse than Ignorance, and will be followed with a severer Punishment.

5. Such as have continued long in Sin, will on that Account receive the greater Damnation. *Ijai. 65. 20. The Sinner of an Hundred Years -old shall be cursed:* The longer any Man has lived in Sin, the heavier will that Curse be which shall at last fall upon him. An old Drunkard, or one that is old in Adulteries, or in any other way of Wickedness, will have the sadder Reckoning in the Day when God shall call them to an Account. Many a Sinner that has lived to be, it may be, Threescore Years old, if he had died, and gone to Hell in his Childhood, or in his Youth, would have had a cooler Place there than now he shall have. When Sinners for a long time abuse the Patience and Goodness of God, in sparing
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ring their Lives, what do they do? *They treasure up to themselves Wrath against the Day of Wrath, and Revelation of the Righteous Judgment of God, Rom. 2. 4, 5.* Especially, if withal they have enjoyed the Means of Grace for many Years. The Lord said of *Jezebel*, that he gave her space to repent, and she repented not, and therefore he would cast her into a Bed, not only of Tribulation, but of great Tribulation, *Rev. 2. 21, 22.* The longer the Space, and the greater the Means to bring unto Repentance, if neglected, the heavier will the Tribulation be at the last.

6. They that draw others into Sin, to the Ruin of their Souls for ever, will receive the more intolerable Damnation on that Account at the Day of Judgment. There have been Men in the World, who have made whole Nations to Sin, Corrupting and Poysoning the Souls of Millions, as did *Jezeboam*, who made *Israel* to Sin. Oh! what an intolerable Damnation must such miserable Men receive in the Day of Judgment? To be guilty of the Blood of one Soul is a fearful thing. *Jer. 2. 34. In thy Skirts is found the Blood of the Souls of poor Innocents.* There are that have taught others Wickedness; there are that entice un-

to Evil, there are that dissuade and discourage others from that which is Good, in their Skirts will be found the Blood of the Souls of them that have been so unhappy as to hearken to them. How will such Sinners cry out in Hell against the Persons that have murder'd their Souls, saying, *We may thank you for our being in these intolerable Torments.* It is reported concerning one of the Kings of Scotland, that he thought a dead Man whom he caused to sin against his Conscience, appeared to him, crying out, *Wo worth the Day that ever I knew thee, for because I sinned to please thee, I am now adjudged to the Torments of Hell.*

7. The wicked Children of Godly Parents, dying in their Sins, will receive a greater Damnation in the Day of Judgment than the other Children shall. *Matth. 8.*

12. *The Children of the Kingdom shall be cast into utter Darknes, there shall be weeping and gnashing of Teeth.* They shall be cast into utter Darknes, into the remotest Place from Heaven, into the deepest darkest Place in Hell. How should it be otherwise, when they have sinned against their Education? When the Examples, and all the Instructions and Counsels

Counsels of their Godly Parents shall rise up in Judgment against them at the last Day? Yea, when the very Prayers and Tears which their Parents have shed for them shall be like Oyl, to make the Everlasting Flames of Hell burn with the greater Fierceness and Fury. When *Dives* was in Hell, it was an Addition to his Torment, that He was a Son of *Abraham*.

Infer. 4. There is nothing of more dangerous Consequence, than for Men not to give a due Reception to the Gospel of Christ. We see that sinning against the Gospel exposeth to the worst Vengeance. It does so as to Eternal Judgment, and Spiritual Judgments (which make way for that which is Eternal) are the Consequent of not giving a due Entertainment to the Gospel. It becomes a Savor of Death unto Death, unto them that perish under it. For Men to have their Ears deafned, their Hearts hardened, and their Eyes blinded by the Light of the Gospel, is a dreadful thing. Was it not so with the *Pharisees*, when Christ said to them, *For Judgment am I come, that they who see might be made Blind*, John 9. 39. or else the Gospel is taken away from a People who are unthankful and unfruitful under it. For this Cause does the Lord

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send upon them a Famine; not a Famine of Bread, and of Water, (tho' that is a black and a terrible Judgment) but which is a Thousand times worse, *a Famine of hearing the Word of the Lord.* Have not the *Jews* found it so? The Gospel of the Kingdom which was first preached to them, is taken from them, because they did not bring forth the Fruit thereof. And has not all *Asia* found it so, which was gloriously enlightened with the Gospel, but is now all in Darknes? And has not all *Africa* found it so? There were once Famous and Learned Ministers in that part of the World, whose Writings are of Use to the Church of God still, and Three Thousand Churches there, but now there is none in that vast Continent; and how it will be with the lately Gospellized *America*, no Man can say: But alas! Men's Hearts are not affected with Spiritual Judgments so much as with Temporal. Know then, that the most outward Plagues (as well as those which are Inward and Spiritual) are the usual Consequent of Disobedience to the Gospel. Witness *Jerusalem* and the whole Jewish Nation. The Gospel was offer'd to them, but they made light of it, and entertained some of the Preachers of it spitefully,

fully, and flew them. For this the King of Heaven was wrath, sent his Armies, destroy'd those Murderers, and burnt their City. *Matth. 22. 7.* God brought an Army of *Romans* upon them to be the Executioners of his Wrath. There never was Nation so plagued as the miserable Jewish Nation has been. *1 Thess. 2. 16.* *Wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.* It is enough to make an Heart of Stone to bleed, to read the Story of the Miseries which the *Jews* were exposed unto after they had rejected the Gospel: And all this was but what the Lord had foretold. *Matth. 24. 21.* *Then shall be great Tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the World to this time; no, nor ever shall be.* And in these latter Ages, what sad Consequences have there been of Disobedience to the Gospel? How has it been in *Germany*? In *Luther's* Time, almost Two Hundred Years since, the Light of the Gospel broke forth wonderfully, and shined down the Darkness of Popery; the *Protestants* there went under the Name of *Evangelici*, because they professed a Subjection to the Gospel, but for all that they were guilty of a *Practical Disobedience* thereunto. A Famous Minister there hearing one read *Christ's* Sermon

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Sermon on the Mount, said *Ant hoc non est Evangelium, aut nos non sumus Evangelici*: If this be Gospel, we are not worthy of the Name of *Evangelics*. And what's come on that Empire? Especially on the *Palatinate*, where the Gospel did first shine, and in the greatest Splendor? Come and behold the Works of God, and what Desolations He has made in that part of the Earth, and let us tremble at it. Sometimes, for one Refusal of the Gospel, particular Places have been swept away with desolating Judgments, as with a Beesom of Destruction. In *Scotland* there was an Eminent Minister, in the beginning of the Reformation, whose Name was *Wiseheart*; he preached for some time at a Town called *Dundee*, but after a while, the Chief Man in the Town told him he should preach no more. Well, (said he) *God knows I have desired and endeavoured your Salvation: The Word of God have I brought to you, but you have refused it, without doubt the Lord will revenge the Contempt of His Word: Some heavy Judgment is near unto you: If it be not so, say I am not led by the Spirit of Truth*. So he came out of the Pulpit, and went his way. Within four Days after which, the Plague broke in upon the Town, and

and swept away incredible Numbers of the Inhabitants in a few Days time. The same Minister came to a Town called *Haddington*, observing their Indisposition to receive the Gospel, he thus expressed himself, *I have heard of thee, that Two or Three Thousand of thy Inhabitants would run to see a vain and wicked Play, when as scarce One Hundred will come to hear the Word of God. With Fire and Sword you shall be plagued, and the present Inhabitants shall be driven from their Houses.* The Prediction was soon fulfilled: For Enemies of another Nation possessed the Town, burnt a great part of it, drove away the Inhabitants, and but few of them ever returned. Something of this Nature have we ourselves known in this Land. The *Narragansets* (who were then the greatest Body of *Indians* in *New-England*) many Years since had the Gospel offer'd to them, but they would not receive it, which occasioned a Minister of God thus to express himself, *If the Lord does not destroy the Narragansets, then say, that his Spirit has not spoken by me.* We have seen that Prediction verified. There was a considerable number of the *Wampernoag Indians*; Old Mr. *Elliot* (whom some have called the *Ameri-*

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can Apostle) offered the Gospel to them. Their *Sachem* (that *Philip*, that began the War upon the *English* above Twenty Years ago) rejected it with Scorn, and took a Button into his Hand, and said, He cared no more for the Gospel, than he did for that Button. And what has God done to that *Pagan*, and to all those *Indians*? How few of them are left breathing on the Face of the Earth at this Day? So dreadfully dangerous a thing is it, not to give a due Reception to the Word of Christ. There are some Parts in this Country, who have had the Gospel lately sent to them; so it is in *Road-Island*, and in some other Places. We had need pray for them, that they may (as I hope they shall) have Grace to receive it as they ought to do, otherwise there is cause to fear, that Signal Judgments are not far off from them.

Let the last Use be for *Exhortation*. Suffer the Word of Exhortation.

Oh! let every Soul be perswaded to obey the Gospel. Some Considerations and Counsels let me spread before you, and so conclude.

Consider. 1. This is a Matter, in which we are infinitely concerned.

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It is not a light trivial Thing which you hear, but a Matter of Life and Death. Men are wont, when their Life is in Danger, to be very much concerned in their Thoughts and Spirits. Truly, so is the Case here; *Moses* said to the Children of *Israel*, *Deuter. 32. 47. Set your Hearts unto all the Words which I testify amongst you this Day, for it is not a vain thing for you, it is your Life.* So let me say to you this Day, obey the Gospel, *it is your Life.* The Life not of your Bodies, but of your Precious Souls, are concerned in this Matter. An Immortal Soul, which is more worth than the whole World, is concerned herein. *Is. 55. 2, 3. Hearken diligently, and let your Soul delight in Fatness: Hear, and your Souls shall live.* Ay, your Souls, your Souls, the Life of your Souls for ever depends upon this. Who is there that would not live for ever? Who is there that would not be happy to Eternity? Except you obey the Gospel, you cannot have Eternal Life. When therefore the *Jews* put the Gospel from them, they were told, that they judged themselves unworthy of Everlasting Life. Matters wherein Eternity is concerned, are serious and weighty things. Now every Soul amongst us must be, and shall be either
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Eternally Happy, or Eternally Miserable, according as we receive or refuse the Gospel. Since then, Life, Salvation, Eternity depends thereon, we are infinitely concerned in this Matter.

Consider. 2. *The Good that will certainly follow, if we obey the Gospel.*

Blessedness will follow, *Luke 11. 28. Blessed are they that hear the Word of God, and keep it.* It is not an External, but an Internal, or Obediential Hearing of the Word of God, that will make a Blessed Man. *James 1. 25. Whoso looketh into the perfect Law of Liberty (which is, as I said to you, the Gospel) and continues therein, he not being a forgetful Hearer, but a Doer of the Word, this Man shall be blessed in his Deed.* That Man, all whose Sins are pardoned, is surely a Blessed Man. But so it is with the Man who has obeyed the Gospel, as was shewed in the first *Use*. It may be some of you have been guilty of grievous Sins; of taking the Lord's Name in vain; of profaning His Sabbaths; of Disobedience to Parents; of vile Uncleanness; of Thefts; of Lying; and these horrible Sins committed many a time; Repent of them, and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and then hear what God

in the Gospel says to you. *Isai. i. 18.* Come and let us reason together, saith the Lord, tho' your Sins be as Scarlet, they shall be as white as Snow, tho' they be Red, like Crimson, they shall be as Wooll. The Reddest, the Bloodiest Sinners, if they be willing and obedient to the Gospel, shall have all their Sins Pardon- ed; think of it, you that have been guilty of Sins, which are of a Crimson Dye. It may be there are some of you that have continued long in your Sins. Indeed, if you do so a while longer, there will be no Hope for you, and as I said to you, the Punishment to be inflicted on you in the Day of Judgment, will be greater for your having persisted so long in your Disobedience; but if now, at last, without any further Delay, you will be persuaded to do as the Gospel requires, all your past and long-continued Rebellions shall be as if they had never been. When once there was a Man, that Preaching to old Sinners, said, *Do you think that God will accept of you now? Do you think that God will take the Devil's Leavings?* That Holy Martyr, Mr. Bilney, hearing him speak so, was much offended. That Man (said he) *does not preach the Go- spel.*

spel. Let an old Sinner come to Christ, and He will accept of him. The Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ is so exceeding abundant, as that He will not refuse any that come to him with Penitent and Believing Hearts. Altho' it is a very rare thing for Sinners that have lived all their Days under the Gospel, to be Converted in their old Age, nevertheless some such Instances, some such Mirrors and Miracles of Divine Grace there have been in the World. One that was brought home to Christ in his old Age, would afterwards often say, with Admiration at the Grace of God towards him, *If I had died before I was Threescore and Sixteen Years old, I had certainly gone to Hell.* You then, who are come to your Eleventh Hour, to the Conclusion of your Days, be perswaded now to hear the Call of the Gospel, and Blessed are you.

Consider. 3. *We, for our Parts, have had the Gospel graciously vouchsafed to us.* If we perish, we shall not perish for lack of Vision. How sad is it, to perish in the Valley of Vision? How inexcusable shall we then be? We have had the written Gospel. When *Ephraim* had for a long

time neglected and disused the Divine Law, to aggravate his Crime, the Lord said, *I have written to him the great things of my Law, but they were counted as a strange thing.* And has not the Lord written to us the Great, the Precious and Wonderful Things of his Gospel? Have you not the Blessed Bible in your Houses? That Man is guilty of a grievous Sin, that liveth without a Bible. Now in that the Gospel is contained: And have we not the Gospel preached to us by those whom the Lord has raised up, and sent to speak in His Name? How many Sermons have you heard? Who is there amongst us all, but has had many an Offer of Christ? Have we not been born and brought up in a Place, where the Light of the Gospel has shined upon us all our Days? Such will, in the Day of Judgment, be found dear Places to live in, if the Gospel has been disregarded or disobeyed. It were better to go to Hell out of any Place, than out of such a Place: Better to have lived in *Gomorrab*, than in *New-England*: Better to have lived in *Sodom*, than in *Boston*, if you die in your Sins. Oh! that you would think on this one Word, and remember it when you shall see me no more: There is

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not a Soul in this Assembly but shall certainly either go to Heaven, or to one of the darkest Places in Hell.

Consider. 4. *There are many amongst us, who, notwithstanding they have lived under the Light of the Glorious Gospel of the Blessed God, have not been obedient thereunto.*

Oh how many! The Gospel saith, repent and turn your selves from all your Transgressions, that so Iniquity may not be your Ruin; but is there not many a Soul, which hears me this Day, that has not turned from all his Transgressions? There is some Sin or other that they live in, and will live in, tho' it be their Ruin. There is no perswading them to turn from it. The Gospel saith, He that has Christ has Life; therefore, above all things, make sure of an Interest in him; but how many are there that content themselves to live from one Week after another, nay, from one Year after another, in a careless Neglect of Christ, and of the great Salvation, without any Assurance of their Interest therein? The Gospel, that Grace of God, which brings Salvation, saith, *Live soberly*; but are there not those among us, that live in Drunkenness, and in other sorts of Intemperance? The Gospel saith, *Live Righteously*;

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ously; but are there not those that are Unrighteous in their Conversation towards Men? They'll defraud their Neighbour of his Due; they'll slander their Neighbours; nay, some, that will steal. And what an astonishing thing is it, that Persons, who live under the Light of the Gospel, should dare to commit such a Sin as Theft, which Men, who have had nothing but the Light of Nature to instruct them, have abhorred as a shameful and abominable Evil? The Gospel says, *Live Godly*; but what Ungodly Lives do some live? *Every one that is Godly will pray*, Psal. 32. 6. so then Prayerless ones are Ungodly ones. How many such are there? Is it not said in *Matthew's Gospel*, *Enter into the Closet, and pray to your Father, which is in secret*, Matth. 6. 6. Are there not young Men, that live without secret Prayer? And it may be some elder ones too, that can content themselves to live without Prayer in secret before the Lord for whole Days together? And are such Godly, think you? Are there not some so Ungodly as to live, without Prayer in their Families? Art thou an Householder, and yet art so devoid of Godliness, as not to pray with thy Family? Then the Gospel Condemns thee, and God Almighty will Damn

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Damn thee, for living in the Neglect of a known Duty; against thy Conscience, which finites thee for it. How often have you been put in Mind of that Scripture? *Jer. 10. 25. Pour out thy Fury on the Families which call not on thy Name.*

Consider. 5. Nothing will be such a Terror to the awakned Conscience of a Sinner, as the sad Thought and Remembrance of a neglected Gospel.

When Dives was in Hell, and it was said to him, *Remember that in thy Life-time thou hadst thy good things.* That Word and that Remembrance must needs cut him to the Heart. But how will it pierce thy Soul, if thou diest in thy Sins and Unbelief, when it shall be said to thee, *Remember that in thy Life-time thou hadst good Books, and above all, the Blessed Bible put into thy Hands. Remember that in thy Life-time thou didst live for several Years under the Teaching of such a Minister, who shewed unto thee the Way of Salvation, but thou wouldst not hear it? Conscience will Torment and Tear the Souls of Sinners for this one Day. At the last they shall find it so. Prov. 5. 11, 12, 13. Thou shalt mourn at the last, and say, how have I hated Instruction, and my Heart despised*

despised Reproof, and have not obeyed the Voice of my Teachers, nor inclined mine Ear to them that instructed me. It may be, when Death comes, Conscience, which is now asleep, will awake and roar upon thee like a Lion, and tear the Cawle of thy Heart, with the sad Remembrance of a neglected, despised Gospel, which thou hast had the Offer of. I remember a young Man, who on his Death-bed, being in grievous Horror of Conscience, I asked him what was the Sin that did lie most heavy on his Conscience? *Oh! (said he) it is my Neglect of the Means of Grace. I have heard Sermons, and regarded them not, and do you think there is any Hopes of Mercy for such an one?* This was the dying Cry of a young Man, whose Conscience was awakned with the Sight of Death and Eternity. There was another, who was Executed by the Sword of Civil Justice for a horrid Crime; when he was on the Gallows, being advised to declare what Sin did most of all trouble and terrifie his Conscience, he said with Anguish of Soul, *That the Thought of the Sermons which he had heard, but regarded not, was a greater Trouble and Terror to his Conscience, than all the Sins that ever he had been guilty of;*

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notwithstanding he had been a very wicked Man. Verily it is thus with Sinners in Hell, who have gone thither with a load of Sermons on their Backs. Every Disobedience to the Call of the Gospel, every Neglect of Christ, will lie heavier than Mountains of Lead on the Soul of such a Sinner, when he must be in that Place, where the Worm dieth not, and where the Fire never shall be quenched.

Oh then be perswaded to obey the Gospel.

In order thereunto, some Counsel let me leave with you.

1. *Remember who it is that speaks to you in the Gospel.* It is not Men only, nor is it an Angel that speaks in the Gospel, but one, who is Better and Greater than all the Angels in Heaven. It is the Lord; it is the Son of God himself. When the Prince of Life, when the Lord of Glory speak to you, will you not hear what He says? O give earnest Heed to the Things which you hear; He speaketh from Heaven: Shall the Word that comes from him that is in Heaven, be slighted by any of you? *Heb. 12. 25. See that you refuse not him that speaks; for if they escaped not, who refused him that spoke on Earth, much more shall*

shall not we escape, if we turn from him that speaks from Heaven. When the Law was given, the Son of God came down on Mount *Sinai*, and so spake on Earth to the Children of *Israel*, and His Voice then shook the Earth, and they that disobey'd it, died for it. Now He is in Heaven, yet He speaks from Heaven to us, who are on the Earth, by that Gospel which the Holy Ghost has sent down from Heaven. As ever we desire to escape Everlasting Destruction, it concerns us to take Heed of refusing or disobeying the Voice of Christ in the Gospel: Yea, God himself speaketh when the Gospel is preached, tho' the Despisers of it are poor frail Men. This Heavenly Treasure comes to us in Earthen Vessels, *2 Cor. 5. 20. We are Ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's Stead to be reconciled to God.* To despise an Ambassador is to despise the King that sent him; so they that despise Gospel Sermons, despise not Men, but Christ and God. Does not Christ Himself tell you so? *Luke 10. 16. He that beareth you, beareth me; and He that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me;* surely if this were well thought on, Men would be afraid to disobey the Gospel.

spel. If when they take a Bible into their Hands to read therein, they remembered and considered, this is God's Book; and whilst I am reading, it is God Himself is as really speaking to me, as if I should hear a Voice from the excellent Glory out of Heaven, they would obey that Word. And if when they hear Sermons, they remembered that God and Christ from Heaven is speaking to them by that poor Man, they would hear with Reverence and Obedience. It is related concerning the Great *Constantine*, That altho' he was the Emperor, and the greatest Man living on the Face of the Earth, he would many times stand up from his Seat when Sermons were preached to him, for which he gave this Reason; I (said he) *consider that God is speaking to me by that Man; and I show that Respect not out of Reverence to the Man, my Inferior, that speaks, but out of Reverence to the Name of God, whose Messenger he is.* Notwithstanding his being the greatest Man in the World, he was sensible that the Eternal God was infinitely his Superior. We read concerning *Eglon*, (an Heathen Prince) that when *Ehud* said to him, *I have a Message from God unto thee*, he arose out of his Seat, *Judges 3. 20.* So if Men did believe, that
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Sermons are Messages from God unto them, that would awe their Spirits so, as they would not dare to disregard and disobey what is in that dreadful Name delivered to them.

2. *Take heed of those things which will hinder you from closing with the Motion of the Gospel.*

Whatever will keep you from closing with Christ, as offered in the Gospel, Oh! beware of it. The World is such a thing, it keeps many an one from embracing Christ. The young Man in the Gospel made fair Promises; but when it came to the Trial, he would rather part with Christ than part with his Estate. Why did not they that were invited to the Marriage of the King's Son, obey the Invitation? It is said, *They went away, one to his Farm, and another to his Merchandize*, Matth. 22. 5. There was the Temptation, wherewith they were entangled and ensnared. Take heed, lest the World become a Snare to your Souls, and keep them at a distance from Christ for ever. Worldly Cares, and VVorldly Profits, and VVorldly Pleasures, are very dangerous things. The Thorny Ground had the Seed of the VVord sown on it, but brought no Fruit to Perfection, be-

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because they were choaked *with Cares and Riches, and the Pleasures of this Life*, Luke 13. 14. And beware of vain Companions. It is the Devil that discourageth and hinders Men from embracing the Gospel, as you have heard; but how does he do it? He makes use of the Sinner's Ungodly Companions, as his Instruments to destroy their Souls. Young Men, think of this; if you love your Lives, forsake them that have been your Companions in sinning, and have no more to do with them, as formerly.

This is not my Counsel to you, but the Lord's, *Prov. 9. 6. Forsake the Foolish, and live.* Young Man, if thou hast any Love for thy Life, follow that Counsel. Alas! how do young Men meet together on Sabbath-day Nights, after they have been hearing the Word of God, for vain Discourse, or it may be, that which is worse, by reason whereof, the Word does not profit them. There are some young Men (I pray God bless them) who meet on the Lord's Day at Night to repeat the Sermons they have heard preached, and to pray together. But there are others, who spend that Evening in vain, and it may be, vile Discourses and Practices. So do they become forgetful Hearers of the Word.

3. Oh,

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3. *Oh! think much and often on the Day of Judgment*; think of the Certainty of it. We must all stand before the dreadful Tribunal; there is no avoiding of it. Then the Enquiry will be, did you obey the Gospel or not? Think what Answer you will make to that Question. An Interest in Christ then will be infinitely better than Ten Thousand Worlds; wherefore make sure of it now. The Apostle, that so he might awaken the *Athenians* to Repentance, puts them in Mind of the Day of Judgment, *Acts* 17. 30, 31. The serious Thoughts of that would strike a Damp on the Hearts of vain Creatures, when they are in the midst of their mad Mirth and Jolity. They could not be merry in their Sins, if they would think seriously on the Account they must give at the last Day. It is storied concerning one of the Kings of *Hungaria*, that being very pensive in his Spirit, a Brother of his asking the Reason of it, that King replied, *I have been guilty of great Sins; and notwithstanding my being a King, I must appear before the Eternal God to Judgment, and the Thought of that makes me sad.* The Wise Man useth this Argument, to perswade unto Faith and Obedience. *Eccles.* 12. 13, 14. *Fear*

God,

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God, and keep his Commandments, for God shall bring every Work into Judgment. Men would be careful of their Works, that they may be Good, and not Evil, if they thought of that as they should do. Yea, Thoughts of the Day of Judgment would make them careful of their Words too. *Matth. 12. 36. Every idle Word that Men shall speak, they shall give Account thereof at the Day of Judgment.* How common is it for Persons to meet together, and all their Discourse is idle Talk. It may be, not one Edifying Word in a whole Hour together; do such Persons think of the Account they must give in the Day of Judgment? The Remembrance of that Day would make them watchful over the Thoughts of their Hearts, because then the Counsels of all Hearts shall be manifested before all the World. *1 Cor. 4. 5.* Constant Thoughts of the Day of Judgment would make Men afraid to sin in secret, because then every secret thing shall be brought into Judgment. This is as sure as Gospel. *In the Day* (saith the Apostle) *when God shall judge the Secrets of Men, by Jesus Christ, according to my Gospel, Rom. 2. 16.* Ministers that think much of the Day of Judgment, will be careful what Sermons they preach, confi-

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considering they must give an Account what and how they have preached. It will make them be in Earnest for the Salvation of Souls. 2 Cor. 5. 9, 10, 11. *We labour, that we may be accepted of him, for we must all appear before the Judgment-Seat of Christ, knowing the Terror of the Lord, we persuade Men:* So Hearers of the Word, that think much of that Day, and believe that they must give an Account of every Sermon they have heard, will certainly take heed how they hear. Oh then let the Day of Judgment come oft into your Minds! Why should you not think of it a few Minutes, every Day, constantly? Say not, it is a terrible Thought. I say unto you, obey the Gospel, and then you may think of *that Day*, without Fear; yea, with Transports of Joy. Obey the Lord Jesus Christ, and labour to be like him, and then fear not the Day of Judgment, 1 John 4. 17. *We have Boldness in the Day of Judgment, because as He is, so are we in the World.* It is related concerning that excellent young Scholar, *John Janeway*, (I wish there were more young Men, and old Ones too, like him) that when some were expressing their Apprehensions and Fears of the Day of Judgment being near, If (said he)

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were sure that the Day of Judgment would begin within this Hour, my Heart would leap for Joy. When I consider the Certainty of that Day, and think that it is near, that Thought does ravish my Soul; no Comforts of this Life are like it. Wherefore obey the Gospel. If you receive that Grace of God, and live accordingly, you may with Joy unspeakable, and full of Glory, be always looking for the Blessed Hope, and the Glorious appearing of the Great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

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